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AMERICAN CRISIS BIOGRAPHIES

Edited by

Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, Ph. D.

The American Crisis Biographies

Edited by Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, Ph.D. With the counsel and advice of Professor John B. McMaster, of the University of Pennsylvania.

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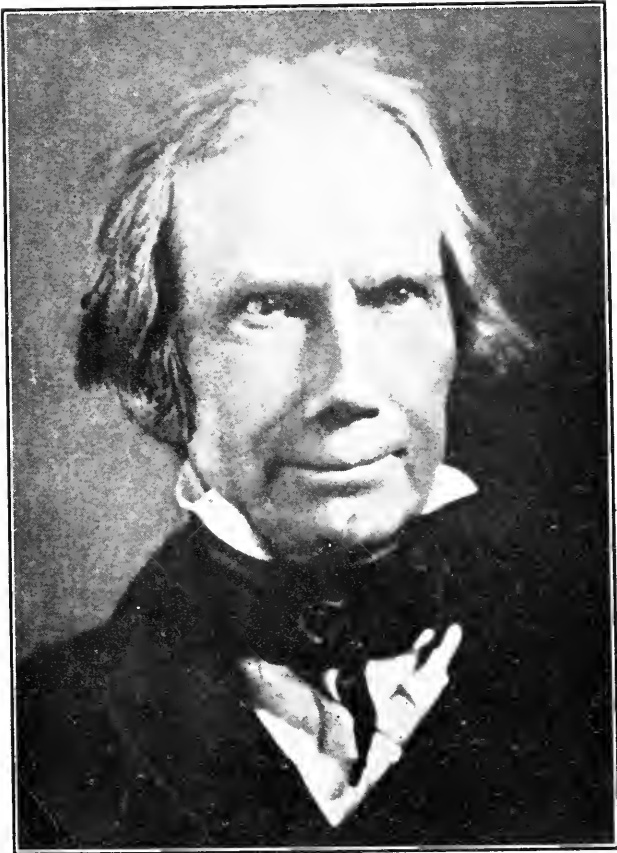
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H Clay

This rare portrait of Mr. Clay is from a talbotype taken in Philadelphia about 1848, a photographic process on paper invented by an Englishman, W. H. Fox Talbot, to supersede the silver plates of L. J. M. Niepce. A large photograph of the print, framed in wood from the floor of "Ashland," which now hangs in the library of the home of Mrs. Thomas H. Clay in Lexington, was used for this reproduction.

AMERICAN CRISIS BIOGRAPHIES

HENRY CLAY

by

HIS GRANDSON

THOMAS HART CLAY

Completed by

ELLIS PAXSON OBERHOLTZER, PH. D.



PHILADELPHIA
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PREFACE

THIS life of Henry Clay was begun by his grandson, Thomas Hart Clay. Other hands have finished it. Mr. Clay died April 8, 1907, and the completion of the book has been accomplished by Dr. Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, the editor of the series, with the assistance of Mrs. Clay.

Mr. Clay was eminently suited for the work of writing the life of his grandfather. He was a man of literary taste, cultivated and scholarly, and he had been a careful student of the political history of the United States. Free from prejudice, with a mind full of judicious admiration for his great ancestor, his aim in this book has been to recall to the minds of Americans the patriotism and statesmanship of Henry Clay, and to recount the charming characteristics which made him the most beloved of public men.

Thanks are due Miss Harrison of Lexington for the use of the diary of her father, James O. Harrison. Mr. Harrison was a Kentuckian, a lawyer of great ability and a man who had the esteem and regard of the whole community. Always a Democrat yet always a devoted friend of Henry Clay, whom he probably knew better than any other of Mr. Clay's contemporaries, Mr. Harrison was chosen to be one of his executors.

Appreciation and thanks are to be expressed to Gaillard Hunt for permission given Mr. Clay to make use of his delightful book, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, and to Charles Scribner's Sons, the publishers of the volume, for their gracious consent also.

A. G. C.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

WHILE I was seeking a writer of a biography of Henry Clay, Bishop Lewis William Burton of Kentucky was addressed for a suggestion. He at once recommended Mr. Clay's grandson, Thomas H. Clay of Lexington, who had been collecting material for this work for many years. His sudden death interrupted his labors upon the volume, as Mrs. Clay states in the preface, and she has very kindly supplemented my efforts to complete it in the spirit in which it was begun.

It is believed that there is in existence little if any material which is not made use of in this biography. Clay's papers and effects were scattered among his descendants. Before the war "Ashland" was torn down and rebuilt by his son, James B. Clay, whose widow a few years later sold it to Kentucky, which proposed to convert it into a college. The estate afterward returned to the possession of the family, and it is now the home of Mrs. Henry Clay McDowell, a daughter of Henry Clay, Jr., who was killed at Buena Vista.

When "Ashland" was purchased by the state, many baskets of letters were taken from the garrets by a man in no way connected with the family. Some, it is said, were blown by the winds up and down the roads; the rest were placed in a storage-house, where they were destroyed by fire. While

it is rather disappointing that in the preparation of this book so comparatively few new sources of information have been opened up, it is satisfying to know that what it is possible to find has been found, and that no considerable number of letters remain anywhere untouched.

E. P. O.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1777—Birth of Henry Clay, April 12th, in the "Slashes," Hanover County, Va., the fifth of seven children.
- 1781—Death of his father, Rev. John Clay, a Baptist clergyman.
- 1791—His mother having remarried, Henry Clay becomes a clerk in a retail store in Richmond.
- 1792—Appointed to a place in the office of the Clerk of the High Court of Chancery in Richmond where he falls under the influence of Chancellor Wythe and becomes a student at law. His mother removes to Kentucky.
- 1797—Follows his mother and stepfather to Kentucky "to grow up with the West." He settles in Lexington as a lawyer.
- 1799—Marries Lucretia Hart, daughter of Colonel Thomas Hart. Writes letters against slavery.
- 1803—Elected to a seat in the state legislature, his first political office.
- 1806—Defends Aaron Burr, whom he believed to be a persecuted man. Elected to the Senate of the United States to fill an unexpired term before he is thirty years of age.
- 1807—Returned to the state legislature, where he becomes Speaker of the Assembly.
- 1809—Again sent to the United States Senate to fill an unfinished term.
- 1810-11—Makes himself by his oratory and his bold advocacy of the nation's rights the leader of the Young Republicans.
- 1811—Elected to the House of Representatives at Washington from the Lexington district and at once becomes Speaker. He warmly champions American rights and is an influence in bringing on the War of 1812.
- 1813—Delivers a great speech in favor of "Free Trade and Seamen's Rights."
- 1814—Resigns the speakership and goes to Europe as a peace commissioner. Treaty of Ghent signed on December 24th.

- 1815—Returns home after a visit to England to find himself re-elected to his place in the House of Representatives where he is again made Speaker. Declines the mission to Russia.
- 1816—Declines a place in President Madison's cabinet as Secretary of War. Becomes a leading advocate of constructive policies, including a protective tariff, internal improvements and a national bank.
- 1817—Invited to become Secretary of War and then Minister to England by President Monroe, but he declines both offices and continues to act as Speaker of the House of Representatives, where he soon becomes an opponent of the administration.
- 1818—Orations in behalf of the people of the South American states.
- 1819—Severe arraignment of General Jackson's course in Florida in the previous year.
- 1820—Asserts the right of the United States to Texas under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase. Advocates the Missouri Compromise. Retires from public life to look after his embarrassed private affairs.
- 1821—Returns to Washington to assist in the final adjustment of the Missouri question.
- 1823—Re-elected to Congress and again to the speakership. Avows his candidacy for the presidency in succession to Monroe.
- 1824—Ninety-nine electoral votes being cast for Jackson, eighty-four for Adams, forty-one for Crawford and thirty-seven for Clay, election from the three highest devolves upon the House of Representatives.
- 1825—Clay supports Adams who is elected over Jackson. Clay becomes Secretary of State. Origin of the "corrupt bargain" story.
- 1826—Duel with John Randolph for his abusive speech alluding to "the coalition of Bluff and Black George." Clay organizes the first Pan-American Congress.
- 1828—Adams a candidate to succeed himself beaten by Jackson for President.
- 1829—Clay retires from the State Department and returns to Kentucky, once more a private citizen.

- 1831—Elected to the United States Senate by the legislature of Kentucky where he combats Jackson's policies and founds the Whig party. Nominated for the presidency at a convention at Baltimore, with John Sergeant of Pennsylvania as the candidate for Vice-President.
- 1832—Outlines his policies on the subject of the bank, the "American system" and other matters. Jackson secures 219 electoral votes and Clay only 49.
- 1833—South Carolina's threats of nullification because of an offensive tariff law met by a compromise. Jackson orders a removal of the deposits from the United States Bank.
- 1834—The Senate censures the President, Clay leading the assault.
- 1836—General W. H. Harrison and others put forward as Whig candidates for the presidency. Van Buren, Jackson's choice as his successor, elected by a great majority.
- 1837—The Jackson censure by the Senate is expunged, Benton leading the fight. Jackson's "reign" comes to an end. Clay reelected to the Senate.
- 1839—His great debates with Calhoun. Whig national convention meets at Harrisburg. Political managers set aside Clay to nominate General Harrison and John Tyler.
- 1840—Clay supports the party ticket. Harrison and Tyler are elected by large majorities.
- 1841—Harrison dies and Tyler becomes President, soon to break with Clay and the Whig party.
- 1842—Clay retires from Congress after an affecting farewell address.
- 1844—Whig candidate for the presidency. Writes the "Raleigh" and "Alabama" Letters on the subject of the annexation of Texas. Defeated by James K. Polk by narrow majorities in New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Louisiana.
- 1845—His friends raise a large sum of money and lift the mortgage from "Ashland," his home near Lexington.
- 1848—Deceived, he again allows the use of his name as a candidate for the presidency. Nomination and election of Zachary Taylor.
- 1849—Again sent to the Senate of the United States to aid in the settlement of the issues raised by the Mexican War.

- 1850—Proposes a compromise which after long and acrimonious debate is adopted. The Nashville convention meets. The South is temporarily pacified.
- 1851—Continues his efforts to keep the two sections at peace. Goes to Cuba for his health, which is much impaired.
- 1852—Meets Kossuth. Dies in Washington June 29th, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. Buried in Lexington after a remarkable series of funeral ceremonies as the corse proceeds through many states.

HENRY CLAY

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

IN the county of Hanover, Virginia, in a neighborhood called the "Slashes," because it was largely marsh-land overgrown with bushes, on April 12, 1777, Henry Clay was born. His father, the Reverend John Clay, was a Baptist minister, a man of great dignity and eloquence, and from him Henry Clay inherited his incomparable voice. Whenever it was known that John Clay was to preach, the people flocked to hear him, and in the summer-time he would speak from a great flat stone on the bank of the South Anna River, in whose clear waters he baptized many who felt the burden of their sins, and wished them washed away.

According to Hotten's *Original Lists of Emigrants to America, 1600-1700*, among the "Musters of the Inhabitants in Virginia" is found this :

"The Muster of the Inhabitants of Jordan's Journey, Charles Cittie, taken the 21st of January, 1624.

"The Muster of John Claye [so spelled in the record] :

“ John Claye arrived in the *Treasurer*, February, 1613.

“ Ann, his wife, in the *Ann*, August, 1623.

Servant :

“ William Nicholls, aged 26 yeres, in the *Dutie*, in May, 1619.”

This John Claye was the first of the name to come to America, and he was the ancestor of Henry Clay. He was known as Captain John Claye, the English Grenadier, and he was one of the Jamestown colonists.

The Reverend John Clay, Henry Clay's father, married Elizabeth Hudson, the younger of the two daughters of George Hudson and Elizabeth Jennings Hudson. George Hudson was a man of importance in Henrico County and was an inspector of tobacco at Hanover Court-House. His elder daughter, Mary, married John Watkins, who, before Kentucky became a state, removed to that part of Virginia, and in 1792, when Kentucky was admitted into the Union, he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. He was also a representative in the first legislature of the new state.

For some unknown reason the Reverend John Clay was frequently called “Sir” John Clay, and in a decree of court given in a friendly suit between the two daughters of George Hudson, Mary Watkins and Elizabeth Clay, it is stated that “the money is subject to the disposition of their husbands, John Watkins and Sir John Clay.” On this subject Henry Clay wrote to a person who wished to establish some relationship with him : “The desire to trace out your ancestry is very natural. I

have often felt it in respect to mine, but I have no written, and very imperfect traditional accounts of them. . . . My ancestors emigrated from England and settled in the colony of Virginia early, I believe, in the seventeenth century. My father was born there, not far from Richmond, on the south side of the James River. He removed to Hanover County, shortly before my birth in that county. His name was John, and he was sometimes called Sir John Clay (as I have seen in the record of judicial proceedings), but he had no right to that title. It was a sobriquet which he somehow acquired. . . . My father was a Baptist preacher.”¹

To John and Elizabeth Hudson Clay were born eight children, three daughters and five sons. Two of the daughters died in early womanhood, one in infancy. Of the five sons, George, the eldest child, died in Virginia just after coming of age. The second son, Henry, died in infancy. John, the sixth child, grew to manhood and became a merchant in New Orleans. He died in that city, leaving no children. The seventh child was Henry, named for the little boy who had died, and the eighth child was Porter Clay.

The Reverend John Clay died in 1781, when his son Henry was between four and five years old. A short time after his father's death, the boy was sent to the country school in the neighborhood, taught by an Englishman named Peter Deacon. Here he learned reading, writing, and a very little arithmetic. In this log schoolhouse in the “Slashes,” the only school he ever attended, he spent three years,

¹ *Private Correspondence of Henry Clay*, edited by Calvin Colton.

and of its master he always had the kindest recollections.

After leaving this school he lived with his mother on the little farm which was their home, and assisted her in such duties as a boy of his age could perform, being often seen on his way to a neighboring mill with a bag of grain ; wherefore his popular title later in political campaigns of the " Mill Boy of the Slashes."

Ten years after the death of John Clay, Mrs. Clay married Henry Watkins, the younger brother of her sister Mary's husband. Captain Watkins has been described as " an elegant, accomplished gentleman, of good blood, and of goodly wealth," and he was a kind stepfather to the young Clays. When Henry was fourteen years of age Captain Watkins procured for him a situation as clerk in a small store for general merchandise, in Richmond, kept by Richard Denny, and here he remained one year.

In his stepson Captain Watkins seems to have felt special interest, and soon realized that he deserved better opportunities than could be met with in Mr. Denny's little store. Through the aid of his friend, Colonel Thomas Tinsley, a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, he obtained for the boy a clerkship in the office of Tinsley's brother, Peter, who was Clerk of the High Court of Chancery of which George Wythe was Chancellor. The latter was a frequent visitor at Mr. Tinsley's office, where he noticed the diligence of the young clerk, and also his neat penmanship. He needed an amanuensis for writing out and recording the decisions of the court, so he secured the services of Clay, who still

retained his place with Mr. Tinsley, the understanding being that he was to be at the chancellor's service upon demand. This arrangement lasted for nearly four years when, by the advice of Chancellor Wythe, he took up the study of law in the office of Attorney-General Brooke, who was afterward Governor of Virginia. For a year he was an inmate of that gentleman's home. This association was of infinite value to the young man, as through it he mingled with the best society of Richmond, and his character and manners were fashioned to the chivalric standards of "Old Virginia."

His faithful work, his intelligence, his courtesy and engaging manners secured for him the most friendly consideration of Chancellor Wythe, who directed his reading and studies, and placed his own library at the youth's disposal. Nearly every day in the chancellor's office he met the most distinguished men of Virginia, many of whom had served in the councils of the nation during the troublous times of the Revolution. Twice he had the extreme good fortune to hear Patrick Henry, whose birth and beginnings were also in Hanover County. "Above all, in these relations," says Robert C. Winthrop, "he acquired the friendship of George Wythe, who was not only one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and a distinguished member of the Virginia convention which ratified the Federal Constitution, of which he was an earnest advocate and supporter, but who signalized his love of human freedom by emancipating all his negroes before his own death and making provision for their subsistence. The influence of such a friendship and

such an example could hardly fail to manifest itself in the future of any one who enjoyed it. It was better than an education.”¹

In 1792, shortly after Henry Clay was established in Mr. Tinsley's office, Captain Watkins with his family removed to Kentucky which had just been admitted into the Union. Even as late as 1792 the journey from Hanôver, Virginia, to Kentucky was no small undertaking. The roads were mere trails and bands of roving Indians were frequently encountered, but the party arrived safely in Woodford County, where they resided for many years. With Captain Watkins and his wife came her two sons, John and Porter Clay. The latter, the youngest of the Clay children, was apprenticed to a cabinet-maker, and in the *Kentucke*² *Gazette* of December 7, 1805, appears his advertisement as a chair and cabinet-maker. He was a man of great piety and late in life became a Baptist minister. Removing to Missouri, he preached the first English sermon ever preached west of the Mississippi River. He died on December 30, 1849, at Camden, Ark.

Henry Clay studied law for one year and was admitted to practice in the Virginia Court of Appeals in 1797, shortly afterward changing his residence to Lexington, Ky. He had felt the separation from his mother, and the longing to be near her induced him to follow her over the mountains. She was a woman of great vigor of mind, warm-hearted and

¹ Robert C. Winthrop, *Memoir of Henry Clay*. For a succinct account of the life of this able Virginian see Sanderson's *Biographies of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*.

² The early spelling.

imperious, loving to her children and a devoted friend. She died in 1829 in the eightieth year of her age, and was buried in the country graveyard near her home. In 1851, the year before his death, Henry Clay had her remains removed to the beautiful cemetery on the outskirts of Lexington and placed in his lot there. Over her grave he caused to be erected a simple monument of Italian marble with this inscription upon it :

Elizabeth Watkins

Formerly

Elizabeth Clay

Born 1750

Died 1829.

*This monument, a tribute to her many domestic virtues
Has been prompted by the filial affection and veneration
Of one of her grateful sons
H. CLAY.*

Henry Clay arrived in Lexington in November, 1797, but he did not immediately begin to practice his profession, wisely waiting until he could become familiar with the statutes of Kentucky, and with the peculiarities of local procedure. In March, 1798, the following entry appears in the order-book of the Lexington District Court :

“Henry Clay, Esquire, produced in Court a license and on his motion is permitted to practice as an Attorney-at-Law in this Court, and thereupon took the several oaths by Law prescribed.”

For several months he devoted himself to further study of the law, and he joined a debating society whose proceedings were open to the public, and were attended by “the fashion and intelligence of the

town." He was soon admired and courted by the people. In his farewell address to the Senate in 1842 he said: "Scarce had I set my foot on her [Kentucky's] generous soil when I was seized and embraced with parental fondness, caressed as though a favorite child, and patronized with liberal and unbounded munificence."

On all public occasions he was greatly sought for, and this notice appears in the *Kentucke Gazette* of July 10, 1800: "Friday last being the anniversary of American Independence, it was celebrated in this place with the usual joy and enthusiasm. At twelve o'clock the volunteer companies of Infantry and Horse assembled at the Public Square, attended by a considerable concourse of citizens. They proceeded to the Court-House, where an eloquent oration was delivered by Henry Clay, Esquire."

When Henry Clay changed his home from Richmond, Va., to Lexington, Ky., that town was already a place of importance. It was the capital of the "blue grass country" and was surrounded then, as now, by broad and beautiful lands. Its very name no doubt contributed to its fame, as it was a patriotic memorial of the first battle-ground of the Revolution by a few hunters who had established their camp-fires there. The hardy pioneer settlers were followed by a development of culture which was probably not surpassed in any town west of the Alleghanies at that early day. In it was published the first newspaper beyond the mountains, the *Kentucke Gazette*, established in 1787; and the first library in the West was started there in 1795. The society of the town was intelligent and cultivated, and the

bar of Lexington at that time was composed of a high type of able men. It was also a place of commercial importance and a manufacturing centre. As early as 1797 it possessed a "public theatre and a company of actors." In the *Navigator*, published in Pittsburg in 1801, this description of the town appears: "Lexington, in fact, is a place of great business, and the inhabitants seem peculiarly and happily calculated to enjoy their situation, and the hospitality and friendship of each other. The prevailing disposition in the people makes the place very lively and highly agreeable to strangers."

A student of the times says: "The society of those early days was primitive only in the sense of being somewhat colored by its primitive environment, and in possessing certain uncouth elements inseparable to a frontier settlement. It was far from being immature, or unpolished, or illiterate. The settlers brought with them the high ideals of the 'Old Dominion.' The husbands and brothers came fresh from the training hands of the most vigorous and intellectual race of men the world has ever seen, and in not a few instances the pupils had outstripped their masters."¹

One of the members of the Lexington bar was George Nicholas, a statesman as well as an eminent lawyer. "His powers of argumentation," it is related, "were of the highest order and his knowledge of the laws and institutions of his country placed him in the first rank of distinguished men by whose wisdom and patriotism they were estab-

¹Samuel M. Wilson, *Early Bar of Fayette County*.

lished. A member of the [Virginia] convention that ratified the Constitution of the United States, he was the associate of Madison, of Randolph, and of Patrick Henry, and he came to Kentucky in the fulness of his fame and in the maturity of his intellectual strength.”¹ He was the first Attorney-General of Kentucky, appointed by Isaac Shelby, the first Governor, and Humphrey Marshall in his *History of Kentucky*, said of him: “If the Constitution of Kentucky could be ascribed to any one man, it should doubtless be to Colonel George Nicholas, who took the lead in the convention to which he was justly entitled by his superiority of talents and acquirements, in the use of which he was known to be liberal. The resemblance observable in the Constitution of Kentucky to that of the United States may be accounted for by his admiration of the merits of the original, and the distinguished part he had taken in the convention of Virginia in favour of its adoption.”

Another member of the bar was John Breckinridge, who became Attorney-General under President Jefferson. As a lawyer none excelled him and few were his equals.

James Brown, the first Secretary of State of Kentucky, was also a member of the Lexington bar at this time. He was a man of great culture and legal ability. After the purchase of Louisiana he removed to New Orleans, where he aided Edward Livingston to prepare the Civil Code of Louisiana. He was twice a United States senator from Louisiana, and he was appointed by President Monroe Minister

¹ From a speech by Governor Charles Morehead.

to France, being continued in that office by President John Quincy Adams.

Perhaps the most remarkable member of the group, however, was Joseph Hamilton Daviess, who at twenty-five was considered to have the best judicial mind in Kentucky, and who was the first lawyer from the West to make a speech in the Supreme Court of the United States.

Such were the men among whom Henry Clay began the practice of law. He himself said in a speech made at Lexington on June 6, 1842: "I obtained a license to practice the profession from the judges of the Court of Appeals of Virginia and established myself in Lexington in 1797, without patrons, without the means of paying my weekly board, and in the midst of a bar uncommonly distinguished by eminent members."

At this time there was much litigation over the titles of land which had been granted by Virginia to settlers in Kentucky. Many of these grants were made to soldiers who had served in the Revolutionary War, and the land had never been surveyed and was not definitely indicated by the warrants, "two white oaks and a sugar-tree" being considered sufficient marks in many instances. Sometimes half a dozen grants covered the same area and the courts were filled with suits involving the land laws of Virginia and Kentucky. In the settlement of these claims Henry Clay won much distinction, and in criminal cases also his ability was unusual, it being shown in the records of the courts wherein he practiced that no prisoner ever defended by him received capital punishment. "I immediately

rushed into a successful and lucrative practice," he said, in 1842, in recalling his early years at the Lexington bar. "When I was a youth," writes James O. Harrison in his *Reminiscences of Mr. Clay*, "I was curious to learn, from those who had heard his early efforts, the impression he made on the public at the beginning of his career. 'He was great from the beginning,' was the general reply."¹

So sudden a success would be difficult to understand without a knowledge of the personality of the man. On this subject Mr. Harrison continues :

"Mr. Clay was six feet one inch in height, without being fleshy or bulky and was of commanding presence, especially when aroused. Though his long limbs were somewhat loosely put together, yet he was never awkward or seemingly embarrassed. His complexion was unusually fair, his eyes were gray and when excited full of fire. His forehead was high, with a tendency to baldness, his nose was prominent and very slightly arched and finely formed. His mouth was unusually large—a long and deep horizontal cut—without being uncouth, and his hair, when a young man, exceedingly white. If ever there was magnetism in the human voice it was in his. Its tone always harmonized with the tone of his emotion, and never failed to rivet attention and touch the heart. Strangers, persons who never saw him and who, of course, never felt the potency of his presence and manner, can hardly understand the sort of impression made on others by what was called the magnetism of the man.

"He was naturally sympathetic, hopeful, buoy-

¹ Mr. Harrison's MS. Memoirs.

ant. He was not subject to moods of despondency, or gloom, though during his long life he had many heavy afflictions to meet and to bear. His buoyancy, so characteristic of the man in his prime, never died out, though tempered by time. It gave charming freshness to his conversation even when sinking under the heaviness of age. Whatever the occasion or his mood, or whatever the company or subject of conversation, there was something in his presence and manner which impressed those around him that within his personality and beneath that manner there was a power, a force of character to be respected, feared, followed and honored. Had this quiet force been arrogantly, or ostentatiously displayed, it would have broken the charm that made him so attractive and at the same time so commanding.”¹

Among the early settlers of Lexington was Colonel Thomas Hart, who had come to Kentucky from Hagerstown, Md., in 1794. He was a member of the famous Henderson Company, which accomplished so much for the early colonization of Kentucky, and he was the owner of vast tracts of land there and in Tennessee. Soon after his arrival in the West he became a resident of Lexington, where he established himself as a merchant and a trader. He was a man of great enterprise and integrity, and a public-spirited citizen. The doors of his hospitable home were always open to friend and stranger, and perhaps no one had a wider acquaintance all through the Western country, where he was held in high esteem. In 1797 he organized and became the

¹ Mr. Harrison's MS.

president of a society called the "Lexington Emigration Society" whose object was to give information concerning the land about the town, and to offer inducements to industrious farmers and mechanics to settle in that region.

On April 11, 1797, two years after Lexington became his home, Henry Clay married Lucretia Hart, a daughter of Colonel Hart. She was born in Hagerstown, March 18, 1781, and at the time of her marriage she was eighteen, while her husband was twenty-two years old. The house in which they were married still stands on one of the quiet streets of Lexington.

Mrs. Clay was a woman of great dignity, and, though never a beauty, she always attracted attention and inspired respect. During the early years of her husband's official residence in Washington she lived there, and while Mr. Clay was Secretary of State the weekly levees were held alternately at the President's and at his house. "Ashland," the beautiful home in Kentucky, was purchased in 1806 and of it Mr. Clay once wrote to a friend: "I am in one respect better off than Moses. He died in sight of and without reaching the Promised Land. I occupy as good a farm as any he would have found had he reached it, and 'Ashland' has been acquired, not by hereditary descent but by my own labor."

This home is within a mile and a half of the court-house in Lexington and is surrounded by beautiful lawns whose towering trees have sheltered many distinguished guests attracted thither by the fame of Henry Clay. It is of her visit to "Ashland" in 1835 that Harriet Martineau wrote:

“I stayed some weeks in the house of a wealthy landowner in Kentucky. Our days were passed in great luxury, and the hottest of them very idly. The house was in the midst of grounds gay with verdure and flowers, in the opening month of June, and our favorite seats were the steps of the hall, and chairs under the trees. From there we could watch the play of the children on the grass-plat, and some of the drolleries of the little negroes. The redbird and the bluebird flew close by ; the black and white woodpecker with crimson head tapped at all the tree-trunks, as if we were no interruption. We relished the table fare after that with which we had been obliged to content ourselves on board the steam-boats. Tender meats, fresh vegetables, good claret and champagne, with the daily piles of strawberries and towers of ice-cream were welcome luxuries. There were thirty-three horses in the stables, and we roved about the neighboring country accordingly. There was more literature at hand than time to profit by it. Books could be had at home ; but not the woods of Kentucky ;—clear sunny woods with maple and sycamore springing up to a height which makes man seem dwarfish. The glades with their turf so clean, every fallen leaf having been absorbed, reminded me of *Ivanhoe*. I almost looked for Gurth in my rambles. All this was, not many years ago, one vast cane-brake, with a multitude of buffalo and deer, the pea-vine spreading everywhere, and the fertility even greater than now.”¹

For nearly fifty years the beautifying of “Ashland” was a labor of love with both Mr. and Mrs.

¹ Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, Vol. I, p. 139.

Clay, and many of the fine trees which still ornament the spacious lawns were planted by him. He was interested in everything pertaining to agriculture, and he made many horticultural experiments. He was extremely fond of flowers and his taste for ornamental trees and plants was an inspiration to his neighbors and acquaintances. He took great pride also in his horses and cattle, and was interested in the importation of fine stock from England.

The home needed the wise care of its owner and as Mr. Clay's public services required him to be absent, Mrs. Clay gladly undertook its management. No woman ever was better qualified for the performance of the various duties which devolved upon her. She was said to be as good a farmer as her husband, and no farmer in Fayette County excelled him. A farm of six hundred acres, with the added care of the servants belonging to the place, was a heavy burden for a woman to bear, and of her Mr. Clay said at "Ashland," when expressing thanks for a gift which had been made to her by some of his admirers: "I have been so long and deeply absorbed in public affairs as to be compelled to surrender to this beloved partner of my joys and sorrows the almost sole management of our domestic concerns; and how diligently, how nobly she has performed the duties thus devolved upon her can be known to no mortal save myself alone. Why, my friends, again and again has she saved our home from bankruptcy."

Always reserved in manner, this characteristic increased with age, and after the death of her husband,

her life was quiet and secluded. She died on April 6, 1864.

Eleven children were born to them, six daughters and five sons. Two of the daughters died in infancy and two in childhood, one, Eliza H., at the age of twelve, during a journey to Washington in 1825. She was buried in a little Baptist churchyard in Lebanon, O., and later was reinterred in the cemetery at Lexington. The fourth child, Susan Hart, married Martin Duralde of New Orleans and early died there, leaving two sons. The fifth child was Ann, who married James Erwin, of New Orleans. Her beautiful summer home in Kentucky adjoined "Ashland" and there was daily intercourse between the two households. Mrs. Erwin was a woman of rare charm, accomplished and brilliant, and more like her father in intellect than any of his children. She died suddenly in New Orleans in December, 1835, and of this sad event Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, who knew the family intimately, wrote to a friend: "Poor Mr. Clay was laughing and talking and joking with some friends when his papers and letters were brought to him. He naturally first opened the letter from home. A friend who was with him says his first words were, 'Every tie to life is broken.' He continued that day in almost a state of distraction, but has, I am told, become more composed though in the deepest affliction. Ann was his pride, as well as his joy, and of all his children his greatest comfort. She was my favorite, so frank, gay and warm-hearted." ¹

¹ Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, p. 375.

In reply to a letter from Mrs. Smith, expressing her sympathy, Mr. Clay wrote from Washington on December 31, 1835 :

“I received your kind letter of this date. From no friend could condolence on the occasion of my recent heavy loss have come more welcomely, but, dear madam, all the efforts of friendship, or of my own mind have but little effect on a heart wounded as mine is. My daughter was so good, so dutiful, so affectionate, her tastes and sympathies, and amusements were so identical with my own; she was so interwoven with every plan and prospect of passing the remnant of my days, that I feel that I have sustained a loss which can never be repaired. Henceforth there is nothing in this world but duties.”

The eldest son, Theodore Wythe, in consequence of an injury, became insane, and many years of his life were spent in an asylum at Lexington, where he died in 1870.

Thomas Hart Clay, the second son, lived on a farm adjoining “Ashland,” and his hospitable home, “Mansfield,” was always a happy gathering place. He represented Fayette County in the legislature, and was appointed by President Lincoln Minister to Nicaragua, being later transferred to Honduras. He died at “Mansfield,” March 18, 1871.

James Brown Clay, the third son, was a lawyer of ability, and at one time was the partner of his father. He represented the United States in Portugal in 1849 and 1850, having been appointed to the post by President Taylor. After the death of his

father, "Ashland" became his home. He was a member of Congress for one term just before the Civil War. He died in 1864.

The fourth son, Henry, was Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Kentucky Regiment in the Mexican War and was killed at the battle of Buena Vista in 1847.

The youngest son was John Morrison Clay, who became a farmer and his home was a part of "Ashland." He died in 1887.

CHAPTER II

ENTRANCE INTO PUBLIC LIFE

DURING the session of the Kentucky legislature, in 1798, a law was passed authorizing a convention to propose amendments to the state constitution, and one measure which caused much discussion in public meetings and called for many communications, printed in the *Kentucky Gazette*, was that concerning slavery.

The *Gazette* was the only newspaper published within five hundred miles of Lexington and all discussions of public interest were carried on in its columns. In a number of letters signed "Scaevola," Henry Clay earnestly advocated an amendment to the constitution which would set the slaves free. In speeches throughout central Kentucky and in his communications to the press, he urged gradual emancipation, and, though he excited the prejudices of many and failed in his endeavor, he did not cease to defend his views. He was aware that this was a most unpopular measure, "yet, such was the frankness and manliness of his nature, and so controlling his convictions as to the evils of slavery, that he did not hesitate to stem the current on that absorbing question."¹ He said in a speech made at Frankfort, at the anniversary of the Kentucky Colonization Society, December 17, 1829, in reference to these

¹ Mr. Harrison's MS.

early anti-slavery efforts : “ More than thirty years ago an attempt was made, in this commonwealth, to adopt a system of gradual emancipation, similar to that which the illustrious Franklin had mainly contributed to introduce, in 1780, in the state founded by the benevolent Penn. And among the acts of my life, which I look back to with most satisfaction, is that of my having coöperated with other zealous and intelligent friends to procure the establishment of that system in this state. . . . We were overpowered by numbers, but submitted to the decision of the majority with a grace which the minority in a republic should ever yield to such a decision.”

The passage by Congress in 1798 of the Alien and Sedition Laws was strongly resented by the majority of Kentuckians, and Governor Garrard, in his message to the legislature, expressed the opinion of the people when he denounced the measures as “un-constitutional and dangerous to public liberty.” Meetings were held in all parts of the state to take action against them, and Henry Clay made his first appearance in political life while addressing the people of Lexington in opposition to them. A large crowd had assembled in a grove near the town and, as was customary in political discussions at an earlier day, speakers were at hand on the same platform to present arguments upon both sides of the subject. The first address was made by the distinguished Lexington lawyer, George Nicholas, who denounced the favorite laws of John Adams, so soon destined to ruin his political future and make an end to the old Federal party. When he had

concluded, the crowd called, "Clay! Clay!" and the young man mounted the stand. He made a speech which is said to have moved the people as nothing had ever done in the annals of oratory in that neighborhood. The Federalist who followed found it impossible to proceed; it was difficult indeed for him to escape from the wrought-up populace without suffering personal injury. Clay and Nicholas were borne upon the shoulders of the crowd and placed in a carriage, to be drawn amid great cheering through the streets of Lexington.¹ His attitude in opposition to these measures, meant to be so restrictive upon the liberties of the people, marked the beginning of the career which long caused him to be known as the "Great Commoner."

In the summer of 1803, while Henry Clay was absent from Lexington visiting the Olympian Springs, then, as now, a fashionable watering-place about forty miles from the city, he was nominated to represent Fayette County in the state legislature. This nomination was made without any solicitation on his part and indeed without his knowledge or consent. He had shown ability as a young lawyer and had also "caught the eye and charmed the ear by the fascination of his manner and the melody of his voice"; so it was decided by his fellow citizens that he could best represent the county in the House of Representatives. At first there seemed little chance of his election. His opponents had already made great headway in the canvass, having taken every advantage of his absence. Learning that many were determined to support him, Mr. Clay

¹ Mallory, *Life and Speeches*, Vol. I, p. 17.

returned home and addressed the people. Elections at that time and for many years after covered three days, and it was not until the evening of the second day that he reached Lexington. He was chosen almost by acclamation, we are told, and never thenceforth was his name presented to the people of Fayette County, the "Ashland District," that they did not give him their votes with the most enthusiastic devotion in an overwhelming majority.

One of the causes of his election was his advocacy of the Lexington Insurance Company. This company had been incorporated in 1802 with the object of encouraging the extensive cultivation of such crops as could be shipped down the Ohio and Mississippi, and to insure the boats and their cargoes from loss on those rivers. The question of repealing its charter had been brought forward as an issue of the campaign, and when Mr. Clay became aware of this, he promptly decided to accept the candidacy. After his election he defeated in the legislature the attempt to take away the company's franchises.

His opponent in the election was Felix Grundy, a young lawyer about his own age, a man of talent, who, like himself, had gained reputation in the defense of criminal causes. In the following year Grundy was elected to the legislature, where he revived the effort to repeal the charter of the insurance company, having secured during his canvass pledges from other members to vote with him. For two days these brilliant young men discussed the question in the House, and the interest which they created attracted the attention of the Senate, many of whose members were constantly in attendance on

this debate. Grundy was successful in the House, but when the measure was presented to the Senate, the decision was reversed, and the company retained its charter. Clay's arguments had prevailed.

Felix Grundy was one of the most influential young members of the Lexington bar and it was through his exertions that the circuit court system was established in Kentucky. He removed to Tennessee and was a member of Congress from that state from 1811 to 1815. He was elected United States senator from Tennessee in 1829 and served until 1838, when he became Attorney-General under Van Buren.

While the legislature was in session in 1806, an affidavit was filed in the District Court of Kentucky by Joseph Hamilton Daviess, charging Aaron Burr with treasonable designs against the United States, and Mr. Clay soon became involved in the case in an historic manner. He had met Daviess before in an experience which narrowly escaped being a serious "affair of honor." Having bullied and assaulted a tavern-keeper of Kentucky, Daviess felt affronted when Mr. Clay took up the case in the courts. A challenge to a duel was accepted by Mr. Clay, though by good fortune, through the interposition of friends, the meeting was avoided. For more than a year Daviess had been quietly collecting information concerning Burr, who had been in Kentucky pursuing his own plans, and interesting many in them. The sympathies of the people were largely with Burr, whose magnetism was extraordinary; his fascinations seemed to subdue all who came under their spell. He was looked upon as a

great democratic leader. Daviess was a strong Federalist, a man of marked eccentricity of dress and manner and decidedly unpopular. His admiration of Alexander Hamilton had led him to assume his middle name, and it was generally thought that he was influenced in his prosecution of Burr by a hatred aroused by Hamilton's death, and that the filing of the affidavit was done more with the purpose of harassing the man than in an endeavor to convict him of treason. Kentucky was strongly devoted to Thomas Jefferson and little sympathy was felt for so decided a Federalist.

Henry Clay began his political career as a Jeffersonian Democrat and he thought Burr, who now applied to him to act as his counsel, a persecuted man. Clay believed so implicitly in the innocence of the accused that he refused to accept any compensation for his services, though Burr had written from Louisville, November 27, 1806 :—"Information has this morning been given to me that Mr. Daviess has recommenced his prosecution and inquiry. I must entreat your professional aid in this business. It would be disagreeable to me to form a new connection, and various considerations will, it is hoped, induce you, even at some personal inconvenience, to acquiesce in my request. I shall, however, insist on making a liberal pecuniary compensation. . . . I pray you to repair to Frankfort on receipt of this."

The case was brought before the Federal court in Frankfort but the most important witness was absent and no indictment was found. Some time later Burr was again arrested in Kentucky and he applied

to Mr. Clay to defend him, asserting in the following letter, dated Frankfort, December 1, 1806, that he was innocent of any treasonable purposes : “ I have no design, nor have I taken any measure to promote a dissolution of the Union, or a separation of any one or more states from the residue. I have neither published a line on the subject, nor has any one through my agency, or with my knowledge. I have no design to intermeddle with the government or to disturb the tranquillity of the United States, or of its territories, or any part of them. I have neither issued, nor signed, nor promised a commission to any person for any purpose. I do not own a musket, nor does any person for me, by my authority, or with my knowledge. My views have been fully explained to, and approved by several of the principal officers of government, and, I believe, are well understood by the administration, and seen by it with complacency. They are such as every man of honor and every good citizen must approve. Considering the high station you now fill in our national councils, I have thought these explanations proper, as well to counteract the chimerical tales which malevolent persons have so industriously circulated, as to satisfy you that you have not espoused the cause of a man in any way unfriendly to the laws, the government, or the interests of his country.”

Henry Clay had just been elected by the legislature of Kentucky a United States senator to fill the unexpired term of John Adair, who had resigned, and at first he felt that he could not comply with such a request ; but he finally yielded, and Burr again went free, the jury having decided that

the evidence was not sufficient to indict him. Shortly after Mr. Clay's arrival in Washington as a senator, he was shown by President Jefferson a letter written in cipher by Burr, which clearly proved the latter's treasonable designs. To his father-in-law, Colonel Hart, Henry Clay wrote from Washington on February 1, 1807 :

" It seems that we have been much mistaken about Burr. When I left Kentucky I believed him both an innocent and a persecuted man. In the course of my journey to this place, still entertaining that opinion, I expressed myself without reserve, and it seems owing to the freedom of my sentiments at Chillicothe I have exposed myself to the strictures of some anonymous writer at that place. They give me no uneasiness as I am sensible that all my friends and acquaintances know me incapable of entering into the views of Burr. It appears from the President's message to Congress, in answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives calling for information, that Burr had formed the no less daring projects than to reduce New Orleans, subjugate Mexico, and divide the Union. The energetic measures taken by the administration have, I presume, entirely defeated him. Dr. Bolleman and Mr. Swartmout, two of his most criminal agents at New Orleans, having been arrested in that city by the military authority, were sent to this place. They have attempted to effect their liberation by a writ of *habeas corpus*, but after a full investigation of their case they were sent to jail by one of the courts of this district for treason. When they are to be tried has not yet been decided."

Mr. Clay's enemies made use of the fact that he had been Burr's attorney and charged him with being also Burr's partisan. Many years afterward the story was revived by the Jackson party. On October 15, 1828, Clay wrote from Washington to his brother-in-law, Dr. Richard Pindell, of Lexington :

“MY DEAR DOCTOR :

“I observe that some of the Jackson party in Kentucky, for the purpose of withdrawing public attention from the alleged connection between General Jackson and Colonel Burr, have gotten up a charge against me of participation in the schemes of the latter. I have not myself thought it necessary to notice this new and groundless accusation, but prompted by the opinions of some of my friends, and actuated also by the desire to vindicate the memory of an inestimable but departed friend, who fell in the military service of his country, I communicate the following statement which you are at liberty to publish.

“Public prosecutions were commenced in the Federal court of Kentucky against Colonel Burr, in the fall of 1806. He applied to me, and I engaged as his counsel, in connection with the late Colonel John Allen, to defend him. The prosecutions were conducted by the late Colonel Joseph Hamilton Daviess, a man of genius, but of strong prejudices, who was such an admirer of Colonel Hamilton that after he had attained full age he (Colonel D.) adopted a part of his name as his own.

“Both Colonel Allen and myself believed that there was no ground for the prosecutions, and that Colonel Daviess was chiefly moved to institute them by his admiration of Colonel Hamilton, and his hatred of Colonel Burr. Such was our conviction of the innocence of the accused that, when he sent us a considerable fee, we resolved to decline accepting it and accordingly returned it.

“We said to each other, Colonel Burr has been an eminent member of the profession, has been Attorney-General of the state of New York, is prosecuted without cause in a distant state, and we ought not to regard him in the light of an ordinary culprit. The first prosecution entirely failed. A second was shortly afterward instituted. Between the two I was appointed a senator of the United States. In consequence of that relation to the general government, Colonel Burr, who still wished me to appear for him, addressed the note to me of which a copy is herewith transmitted. I accordingly again appeared for him, with Colonel Allen, and, when the grand jury returned the bill of indictment not true, a scene was presented in the court-room which I had never before witnessed in Kentucky. There were shouts of applause from an audience, not one of whom, I am persuaded, would have hesitated to level a rifle against Colonel Burr, if he believed that he aimed to dismember the Union, or sought to violate its peace, or overthrow its Constitution.

“It is not true that the professional services of either Colonel Allen or myself were volunteered, although they were gratuitous. Neither of us were acquainted with any illegal designs whatever of Colonel Burr. Both of us were fully convinced of his innocence. A better or braver man, or a more ardent and sincere patriot than Colonel John Allen never lived. The disastrous field of Raisin on which he fell attests his devotion to his country.

“The affidavit of a Mr. John Dowling has been procured and published to prove that I advised him to enlist with Colonel Burr, and that I told him that I was going with him myself. There is not one word of truth in it so far as it related to me. The ridiculous tale will be credited by no one who knows both of us. The certificate of some highly respectable men has been procured as to his character. His affidavit bears date on the third, and the certifi-

cate, on a detached paper, on the fourth instant. I have no doubt that it was obtained on false pretences, and with an entire concealment of its object. I was at the period of the last prosecution preparing to attend the Senate of the United States at the seat of government, many hundred miles in an opposite direction from that in which it afterward appeared Colonel Burr was bound. So far from my having sent any message to Mr. Dowling when I was last in Lexington, I did not then ever dream that the malignity of party spirit could fabricate such a charge as has been since put forth against me.

“It is not true that I was at a ball given to Colonel Burr in Frankfort. I was at that time in Lexington. It is not true that he ever partook of the hospitality of my house. It was at that time a matter of regret with me that my professional engagements, and those connected with my departure for Washington, did not allow me to extend to him the hospitality with which it was always my wont to treat strangers. He never was in my house, according to my recollection, but once, and that was the night before I started to this city, when, being myself a stranger in this place, he delivered me some letters of introduction, which I never presented.

“On my arrival here, in December, 1806, I became satisfied, from a letter in cypher to General Wilkinson, and from other information communicated to me by Mr. Jefferson, that Colonel Burr had entertained treasonable designs. At the request of Mr. Jefferson, I delivered to him the original note from Colonel Burr to me, of which a copy is now forwarded, and I presume it is yet among Mr. Jefferson's papers. I was furnished with a copy of it, in the handwriting of Colonel Coles, his private secretary, which is with my papers in Kentucky.

“This, my dear doctor, is a true and faithful account of my connection with Colonel Burr.”

Mr. Clay in 1815, in New York, soon after his re-

turn from Ghent, met Burr, who approached him with outstretched hand which he declined to accept, and the two men never saw each other again.

Years afterward Mr. Clay was appealed to in behalf of Mrs. Blennerhassett, who was old and needy, and he presented to Congress a memorial asking for aid for her, but she died in great poverty before the petition could be acted upon.

Henry Clay took his seat in the Senate, December 29, 1806. He still lacked several months of the requisite age, but this disability seems not to have occurred to him, or to his friends in the Kentucky legislature, by whom he was elected. He was immediately appointed to prominent places upon committees. He wrote to his father-in-law: "My reception in this place has been equal, nay, superior, to my expectation. I have experienced the civility and attention of all whose acquaintance I was desirous of making."

Mr. Clay's first speech in the Senate was in advocacy of a bill to provide for building a bridge across the Potomac, of the need of which after investigation he was convinced. He also advocated the appropriation of land on the Kentucky shore for the construction of a canal at the Falls of the Ohio River, and though the subject of government appropriations for internal improvements was new, a committee, of which he was made chairman, was appointed to consider this proposal. Four days after he took his seat in the Senate, he offered a resolution concerning the circuit court system.

In the letter to Colonel Hart, from which quotations have already been made, he wrote: "I am

attempting in Congress several things for the good, as I suppose, of our country. A bill at my instance has passed the Senate to extend to Kentucky and the other Western states the circuit court system of the United States. By this measure, if it passes the other house, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio will have the advantage of two judges upon the Federal bench instead of one, and the circuit judge who presides in those states will also attend the superior bench, and carry with him there a knowledge of the local laws and decisions of those states. I have also proposed a resolution to appropriate a quantity of land to assist in opening a canal at the Falls. I fear the shortness of the session will prevent the success of this measure."

In the brief period in which Clay served in the Senate to fill out Adair's unexpired term, from December 29, 1806, to March 4, 1807, he was a most attractive figure, spoken of by a fellow member as "the ardent, eloquent and chivalrous Henry Clay." His thorough self-possession was combined with the utmost grace and dignity, and his ease of manner and sunny nature won for him the enduring affection of his colleagues.

Upon the adjournment of Congress Mr. Clay returned to Kentucky, soon again to be elected to represent Fayette County in the lower house of the legislature. At the opening of the session he was chosen Speaker. In this service he became the witness of a singular manifestation of the patriotism of the Kentuckians. This patriotism was shown by the hatred of everything British, and induced a motion to prohibit the reading in the courts of the

state of any British decision, or any British elementary work on law. Henry Clay left the Speaker's chair and in one of the greatest intellectual efforts of his life, he showed the fatal consequences which would certainly follow should this motion prevail. The feeling of resentment toward England was still very strong. Among the multitude that feeling was almost universal and many members favored the motion. In the spirit of compromise, Mr. Clay proposed an amendment, that the exclusion of British decisions and legal opinions should extend only to those which had been given since July 4, 1776, as up to that time the laws of Great Britain and of the American Colonies were derived from the same great source. He denounced as barbarous the spirit which would "wantonly make wreck of a system fraught with the intellectual wealth of centuries." His impassioned appeal overcame all opposition and the amended resolution was adopted unanimously. Thus at the early age of thirty Henry Clay saved for Kentucky, "that system with which is associated everything valuable and venerable in jurisprudence."

His patriotism was shown later on also, when he brought into the legislature a series of resolutions expressing approval of the embargo which had been established by the United States against Great Britain, and denouncing the British Orders in Council. The embargo, approved at an extra session of Congress called by Jefferson, in the latter part of 1807, prohibited the departure of any American vessel from any port of the United States and bound to any foreign country, except by special direction of

the President. This measure had been preceded by a non-importation act passed in 1806, which prohibited the introduction into the United States of certain articles of British production.

Both of these, however, were but weak, retaliatory measures induced by the loss which had been occasioned to the United States by the destruction of vessels of her merchant-marine by Great Britain, and by Great Britain's insistence upon the right of search of American vessels for British seamen, and the impressment into her service of such seamen as that nation determined, upon her own judgment, owed allegiance to her government. Provably British men-of-war took from American vessels on the high seas, and even in American waters, a large number of seamen who both by birth and residence were citizens of this country.

The British Orders in Council, concerning which so little is known by the ordinary reader of that period of American history, consisted of three measures, the first of which was taken by the British government, May 16, 1806, and which declared the whole coast of Europe from the Elbe to Brest, a distance of 800 miles, in a state of blockade. The second Order in Council was issued in January, 1807, and forbade neutrals from engaging in the coasting trade with ports hostile to Great Britain. The third prohibited all neutral trade with France or her allies, except through Great Britain. These famous Orders in Council were replied to by two orders issued by Napoleon, the first from Berlin, on November 21, 1806, declaring the British Islands in a state of blockade, forbidding all correspondence

or trade with them, and defining as contraband all English products or manufactures; the second from Milan on December 17, 1807, decreeing that every vessel which should submit to search by British cruisers, or pay any tax or license to the British government, or be bound to or from any British port should be denationalized and sequestered.¹

In December, 1808, Henry Clay introduced a series of resolutions in the Kentucky legislature, and the vote upon those measures indicated the unanimity of feeling in Kentucky as to British aggressions. These resolutions approved of the embargo, denounced the British Orders in Council, pledged the aid of Kentucky in whatever the general government might determine upon in resisting British exactions, and declared that President Jefferson was entitled to the gratitude of the country for the "ability, uprightness, and intelligence which he had displayed in the management both of our foreign relations and domestic concerns."

This endorsement of Jefferson was especially objected to by Humphrey Marshall, who was then serving in the legislature. He was an extreme Federalist, a man of strong prejudices, who despised Jefferson as he did Clay. He violently denounced the resolutions, but without effect, as his own was the only vote against their adoption.

Another resolution then offered by Clay, recommending that the members of the legislature should wear only such clothes as were the product of home manufacture, enraged Marshall beyond endurance. He assailed Clay with the utmost virulence, denoun-

¹ Hunt, *Life of James Madison*.

cing the resolution as the claptrap of a demagogue, to which Clay replied with equal warmth, but in more parliamentary language. This altercation caused Clay to send Marshall a challenge to mortal combat, which was accepted and the duel took place across the Ohio River from Shippingsport, and just below the mouth of Silver Creek, Ind. The account of this duel, written and subscribed to by the seconds, who were Colonel James F. Moore for Henry Clay, and Major John B. Campbell for Humphrey Marshall, was published in the *Kentucky Gazette* of January 31, 1809. Both combatants were slightly wounded when the seconds interfered and prevented a continuation of hostilities.

Mrs. Clay was then at home at "Ashland," the beginnings of which estate Henry Clay had purchased in November, 1806, and her sister, Mrs. Price, who resided in Lexington, having heard that Mr. Clay had gone out to fight a duel, went to be with her until news of the result should be obtained. Mrs. Clay received her sister without exhibiting any excitement, and the two ladies spent the day together, no word of the encounter passing between them. Mrs. Price imagined that Mrs. Clay knew nothing of the meeting and, therefore, did not speak to her about it. In the afternoon a messenger brought a note to Mrs. Clay which she read and at once handed to Mrs. Price, saying, "Thank God, he is only slightly wounded." On reading the note Mrs. Price exclaimed, "Why! sister, I did not think you knew Mr. Clay had gone out to fight a duel, as you haven't said one word to

me about it." Such was the self-control of that quiet, home-loving woman.

In after years a son of Humphrey Marshall, Thomas A. Marshall, was a representative in the Federal House of Representatives, still later becoming Chief-Justice of Kentucky. He was held in the highest esteem in the state and his nature and character were such as to create and justify the high consideration accorded him. He married a niece of Mrs. Clay, and was one of the two men chosen by Henry Clay as executors of his last will.

In the winter of 1809-1810 Clay was again sent to the Senate of the United States to fill another unexpired term, that of Buckner Thruston, who had resigned his place while he yet had two years to serve. The first recorded speech of Clay's congressional career was made on April 6, 1810, on domestic manufactures, which he favored then as he had in the legislature of Kentucky two years before, developing his argument, however, in a much more elaborate way.¹

The subject of a protective tariff of which he later became the particular advocate and with which his name, as with the internal improvement policy, is so closely identified, was not directly at issue. An amendment had been made to a bill appropriating money for the purchase of military supplies and it was a question of instructing the Secretary of the Navy to give a preference to hemp, cordage and sail-cloth of domestic manufacture. Clay entered

¹ Neither the *Annals of Congress* nor the newspapers of the time report the speeches of Mr. Clay which he made in the Senate while he was a member of that body in 1806-1807.

the discussion as an advocate of the industries of Kentucky. He thought that there would soon come a time when we should not want "a pound of Russian hemp." "The Western country alone," he said, "is not only adequate to the supply of whatever of this article is requisite for our own consumption, but is capable of affording a surplus for foreign markets." Commerce was opposing the policy of domestic manufactures. "She is," he remarked, "a flirting, flippant, noisy jade, and if we are governed by her fantasies we shall never put off the muslins of India and the cloths of Europe." He had confidence, however, that "the yeomanry of the country, the true and genuine landlords of this tenement called the United States, disregarding her freaks, will persevere in reform until the whole national family is furnished by itself with the clothing necessary for its own use."

Earlier "a gentleman's head could not withstand the influence of solar heat unless covered with a London hat; his feet could not bear the pebbles or frost unless protected by London shoes; and the comfort or ornament of his person was only consulted when his coat was cut out by the shears of a tailor 'just from London.'" There were pleasure and pride he thought "in being clad in the productions of our own families" and with youthful ardor he exclaimed: "Others may prefer the cloths of Leeds and of London, but give me those of Humphreysville."¹

He rapidly made his way as a speaker in the

¹ Colonel David Humphreys' thriving industrial settlement in Connecticut.

Senate, and his manner, as well as the subject of his discourses, compelled the attention of his colleagues. He was even afforded an opportunity to develop a foreign policy in connection with President Madison's proclamation of October 27, 1810, on the subject of Florida.

The disputed question of boundary seemed now to call for some definite settlement. Insurrection and intrigue suggested immediate action and it was boldly begun. Though discovered by Sebastian Cabot, Florida was formally taken possession of by Ponce de Leon. It was ceded to England in 1763, by the Treaty of Ryswick, but in 1783 was restored to Spain by the Treaty of Paris, to remain in possession of that nation until it was purchased by the United States for \$5,000,000 in 1819. The Mississippi River was discovered by the French in 1688, and eleven years afterward a settlement was made by them near the point of discovery. Possession was ceded to Spain in 1763 but it was restored to France in 1800, and the country was purchased by Jefferson from Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803 by the payment of \$15,000,000.

The question involved in Madison's proclamation was the boundary line between Florida, then in possession of Spain, and the Louisiana Territory, that magnificent domain purchased from Bonaparte. Madison himself had no doubt whatever as to the boundary fixed by the purchase being the line of the Rio Perdido, though Spain asserted that Florida extended west to the Mississippi River. The Spanish demand, if acceded to by the United States, would have given Spain the states of Alabama and Mis-

issippi. The President and his friends, quoting from the treaties between France and Spain, called attention to the cessions and retrocessions of the one country to the other, as well as to the cession of the eastern portion, exclusive of New Orleans, to Great Britain in 1762, and the cession of this territory by Great Britain to Spain twenty-one years later. This caused the title of all the Louisiana country, as far east as the Rio Perdido, to revert to France and to be in France's possession when the Louisiana Purchase was made by Jefferson in 1803.

It is true that the United States had failed to occupy that portion between the Rio Perdido and New Orleans, commonly called West Florida, and to which Spain made claim, largely, if not wholly, because the Spanish garrisons had not been ejected by the United States. In his proclamation of October 27, 1810, President Madison asserted the claim of the United States to West Florida, and also stated that the reason of the delay in its occupation was not the result of any distrust on the part of this nation as to its title to the country, but simply because of our conciliatory views. He announced, therefore, that possession should be taken of that territory "in the name and behalf of the United States."

A bill was then introduced in the Senate on December 18, 1810, providing that the territory of Orleans, one of the two territories into which the Louisiana tract had been divided, "shall be claimed and is hereby declared to extend to the river Perdido," and that the laws in force in the territory of Orleans shall extend over the district in question. The Federalists of the Senate took issue with this

view. Timothy Pickering of Massachusetts, and Outerbridge Horsey of Delaware, denied that the United States had any title to West Florida, and became the advocates of Spain in this cause, denouncing the proceeding of President Madison as an act of spoliation upon an unoffending and a helpless power.

Henry Clay came forward, championing the administration in a speech replete with knowledge gained by careful study of the whole question, and with great irony congratulated Mr. Horsey on espousing the part of the foreign nation in the question of territorial title between that nation and his own. So comprehensively, yet concisely, did he expound the position of the United States; so accurately did he define the cessions and retrocessions of France, England and Spain concerning Florida and Louisiana, that nothing else seemed to be needed. By a citation of the different actions of the three nations, he clearly demonstrated France's title to all the territory ceded by Napoleon to the United States on the payment of \$15,000,000.

Horsey, during his speech favoring the pretensions of Spain to the territory of West Florida, had brought forward, as an additional reason for granting those claims, the displeasure that the proceedings taken by the President might create in Great Britain, which was presumed to be an ally of Spain. This allusion to the possible offense that might be given Great Britain by the United States in furthering her right to the territory she had purchased from France, had not the persuasive influence with the young Republicans of the Senate that Mr. Horsey and a majority of the Federalists of the

Senate seemed to think it should have. On the contrary, it merely fed their indignation, and Clay, the youngest member of the Senate, but the leader of the party in that body, replied to Mr. Horsey in a speech full of withering scorn. He said :

“Is the time never to arrive when we may manage our own affairs without the fear of insulting his Britannic majesty? Is the rod of the British power to be forever suspended over our heads? Does Congress put an embargo to shelter our rightful commerce against the piratical depredations committed upon it on the ocean? We are immediately warned of the indignation of offending England. Is a law of non-intercourse proposed? The whole navy of the haughty mistress of the seas is made to thunder into our ears. Does the President refuse to continue a correspondence with a minister who violates the decorum belonging to his diplomatic character by giving and repeating a deliberate affront to the whole nation? We are instantly menaced with the chastisement which English pride will not fail to inflict. Whether we assert our rights by sea, or attempt their maintenance by land, whithersoever we turn ourselves, this phantom incessantly pursues us. Already has it had too much influence on the councils of the nation. Mr. President, I most sincerely desire peace and amity with England; I even prefer an adjustment of all differences with her before one with any other nation. But if she persists in a denial of justice to us, or if she avails herself of the occupation of West Florida to commence war upon us, I hope and trust that all hearts will unite in a bold and vigorous vindication of our rights.”

With the greatest irony he continued :

“Allow me, sir, to express my admiration at the more than Aristidean justice which, in a question of territorial title between the United States and a foreign nation, induces certain gentlemen to espouse the pretensions of the foreign nation.”

The conciseness of Clay's statement of historical facts as to the condition which prompted Madison's proclamation, and the bill, the result of that proclamation, which was then under debate, so forcibly impressed the Senate that the endorsement of the President's action was no longer in doubt. His speech, and the enthusiasm with which it was received by the country, confirmed Clay's leadership of the Republicans in Congress and made him the recognized champion of the administration.

The Bank of the United States, which was a part of Alexander Hamilton's scheme of national finance, had been granted a charter by Congress in 1791, for a term of twenty years, which would expire in 1811. Henry Clay opposed the renewal of its grant of powers. He had been so instructed by the legislature of Kentucky, and he contended that seven-tenths of the stock was held by British subjects. Foreseeing the crisis with England, now so rapidly approaching, he thought that fact would give her an influence in this country which she might exercise to our great disadvantage. Another reason for his opposing the renewal of the charter was a belief that the bank under its first charter had abused its powers and had endeavored to serve the views of the Federalists. It was asserted that instances of its oppression for that purpose had occurred at both

Philadelphia and Charleston, and while this was denied by the friends of the bank, in his judgment, the charge had been satisfactorily established. He seems to have thought also that the charter of the bank was to some extent extra-constitutional; that is, that certain powers exercised by the bank were not specifically granted to it, but were wrongly inferred from the charter. The plan for its renewal was defeated in the Senate by the casting of the vote of the Vice-President, and in the House by a majority of only one vote.

Henry Clay's arguments against the bank were very powerful, and it may be said that the instructions he received from the legislature of Kentucky to oppose its recharter were but lightly regarded as compared with his own convictions, though his course placed him in an unfortunate position when a few years later, as the great Whig leader, a national bank became one of his leading policies. Perhaps the enthusiasm of youth and his intense loyalty to America, then distinguishing all his utterances and sweeping him and his party on into the War of 1812, will alone serve to explain his attitude toward the bank. He asserted that the Duke of Northumberland was its principal stockholder. If the Prince of Essling, the Duke of Cadore and other French dignitaries were owners of the bank, he wondered whether the Federalists would be the advocates of its recharter. Then the danger of French influence would resound throughout the nation. The peril of British influence was just as great at this hour,—when the two nations were already on the “very brink of war.”

CHAPTER III

THE WAR OF 1812

AT the expiration of the senatorial term for which he had been chosen on the resignation of Buckner Thruston, Mr. Clay returned to Kentucky. So clearly had he exhibited his ability and his influence in the Senate, and so greatly had he impressed his constituency with his intellectual superiority, that upon his refusal to accept the nomination for the Senate, he was elected to the House of Representatives by a large majority. A special session of Congress had been called to meet on November 4, 1811, and Henry Clay then took his seat as a member of the House. On the same day he was elected Speaker by seventy-five of the 128 votes cast. His opponent was William W. Bibb of Georgia.

Clay's election was an unparalleled occurrence in the history of the American Congress. Never having been a member of the House before, his personal acquaintance with its members must have been very limited, yet they at once recognized his superior fitness for the position, when the country's condition was critical to a high degree. The constant endeavors made by Presidents Jefferson and Madison to secure just treatment for the United States from both France and England had invariably failed. Neither nation would make any equitable arrangement through which the various actions of each, so

destructive to this country's commerce, would be terminated. On the part of England, her course in the impressment of seamen from American ships even in American waters, claiming as she frequently did the allegiance of native-born citizens, seizing them upon American ships and putting them to service upon her own, and constituting herself the sole judge of their nationality, as well as positively asserting a right so to do, was regarded by the people of this country as the least tolerable of the wrongs she perpetrated upon them. So thought Henry Clay, and with him were John C. Calhoun, William Lowndes, Langdon Cheves, Felix Grundy and other young "war hawks," all of whom, with burning enthusiasm, resented British aggressions, and determined no longer to submit to them. President Madison's message, sent in to Congress on its assembling, November 4, 1811, recommended "very decisive measures for the vindication of our national honor and the redress of our wrongs." There were members of Congress, remainders of the old Federalist party, representing those elements, the most irreconcilable of which gave expression to their views in the Hartford Convention where they opposed *in toto* the measures advocated by the President.

Clay now spoke in vigorous language in favor of plans to strengthen the army and the navy. He dwelt upon the spirit of American commercial enterprise which was being curbed by the interferences of Great Britain. It was a matter of importance for the West, no less than for the East. He had heard of a vessel built at Pittsburg, which crossed the Atlantic and entered the harbor of Leghorn. The

master of the vessel laid his papers before the customs officer of the place, to be told that there was no such port as Pittsburg. The master procured a map of the United States, pointed out the Gulf of Mexico, and then traced his way up the Mississippi more than 1,000 miles, to the mouth of the Ohio, following the line of that river 1,000 miles still higher to the point from which he had begun his voyage. Thus did he voice the enthusiasm of the young West and inject the fillip of a larger, prouder nationality into the sluggish views of the older states.

Henry Clay was no defender of Napoleon, but he did protest against the statesmanship of the old Federalists which now and for long had spent its vigor in baiting him and all that was French. He had heard Bonaparte denounced by "every vile and opprobrious epithet our language, copious as it is in terms of vituperation, affords." He had been compared to "every hideous monster and beast from that mentioned in the Revelations down to the most insignificant quadruped." He had been called "the scourger of mankind, the destroyer of Europe, the great robber, the infidel, the modern Attila and Heaven knows by what other names." And he continued: "Gentlemen appear to me to forget that they stand on American soil, that they are not in the British House of Commons. . . . Gentlemen transform themselves into Burkes, Chathams and Pitts of another country and forgetting, from honest zeal, the interests of America, engage with European sensibility in the discussion of European interests." In stentorian tones he called upon

Americans to develop and assert a nationality of their own.

The President's message had been referred to a select committee of which Mr. Clay had appointed Peter B. Porter, a member from New York, to be the chairman. Porter made a report to the House, memorable as giving a concise statement of the actions of Great Britain, which were a sufficient reason for the adoption of the most strenuous measures that could be enforced against that nation. In reference to these continued outrages the report said :

“To wrongs so daring in character, and so disgraceful in execution, it is impossible that the people of the United States should remain indifferent. We must now tamely and quietly submit, or we must resist by those means which God has placed within our reach. Your committee would not cast a slander over the American name by the expression of a doubt which branch of this alternative will be embraced. The occasion is now presented when the national character, misrepresented and traduced for a time, by foreign and domestic enemies, should be vindicated. . . . But we have borne with injury until forbearance has ceased to be a virtue. The sovereignty and independence of these states, purchased and sanctified by the blood of our fathers, from whom we received them, not for ourselves only, but as the inheritance of our posterity, are deliberately and systematically violated. And the period has arrived when, in the opinion of your committee, it is the sacred duty of Congress to call forth the patriotism and resources of the country. By the aid of these and with the blessing of God we confidently

trust we shall be enabled to procure that redress which has been sought for by justice, by remonstrance, and forbearance in vain."

Shortly after the report of the committee was received, President Madison in a message to Congress on April 1, 1812, recommended "the immediate passage of an embargo on all vessels then in port, or hereafter arriving, for a period of sixty days." This was at once referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, and a bill, reported by Mr. Porter and referred to the Committee of the Whole, was adopted. In the Senate, however, the period of the embargo was extended to ninety days and the amendment being accepted by the House, the bill became a law on April 4th. This extension of time was due to the Federalists and to some moderate Republicans, who favored it because it gave greater opportunity for the pacific negotiation for which they still hoped, in spite of the constant rebuffs and contemptuous refusals with which England met every effort made by Jefferson and Madison, to obtain justice at her hands.

In forming the important committees of the House, Clay had purposely put them under the control of the war party, of which he himself was the most conspicuous member. His energy in urging even a larger army and a greater increase of the navy than the President had recommended to meet the crisis, "corresponding with the national spirit and expectations," was irresistible; and when taunted by the Federalists with the question, "What are we to gain by war?" his reply, made with startling emphasis, was, "What are we not to lose by peace?"

Commerce, character, a nation's best treasure, honor!"

President Madison was nominated for reëlection in May, 1812. The act declaring war with Great Britain was passed June 18th, and the next day Madison issued a proclamation declaring that war already existed between Great Britain and the United States. This policy naturally met with violent opposition from the same small number who had fought the embargo, Randolph, Quincy and Pitkin being the leaders and spokesmen of the faction. In his denunciation of the members of the war party, and their vigorous prosecution of war measures, Mr. Quincy, in a memorable speech, surpassed even "Randolph of Roanoke" in unparliamentary language. He coupled with his fierce and unsparing denunciation an attack upon Jefferson, which was as uncalled for as it was unwarranted.

Henry Clay displayed his indefatigable zeal in arousing public sentiment. His eloquence in enumerating the wrongs that had been perpetrated by Great Britain upon our seamen, and upon our shipping through the Orders in Council burned. Nothing was left to this country, he asserted, but war or degradation. The war, he said, was declared because Great Britain arrogated to herself the regulating of our foreign commerce under the delusive name of retaliatory Orders in Council, because she persisted in impressing American seamen, because she had instigated the Indians to commit hostilities against us, and because she refused indemnity for her past injuries upon our commerce. It had been asked—"Why not declare war against France, also,

for the injuries she inflicted upon American commerce, and the outrageous duplicity of her conduct?" "I will concede to gentlemen all they ask about the injustice of France toward this country," he said. "I wish to God that our ability was equal to our disposition to make her feel the sense that we entertain of that injustice." Having begun war with Great Britain, however, the United States could not also proceed to war with France, and England's aggressions were in every respect greater than those of the other country.

Henry Clay declared that, of all England's outrageous acts, he considered that of the impressment of our seamen into British service as the most serious, exceeding even that of the Orders in Council. No matter what were the assertions of Great Britain, the actual state of affairs, in regard to her impressing American seamen, was that she came by her press-gangs on board of our vessels and seized our native as well as our naturalized seamen, to drag them into her service. It was wrong, he said, that we should have to prove their nationality; it was the business of Great Britain to identify her subjects. "*The colors that float from the masthead should be the credentials of our seamen.*"

Madison's reëlection was ascertained by Congress on February 18th, on counting the vote cast for him as the candidate of the Republican party, and that cast for De Witt Clinton, his opponent. On May 24th Henry Clay was again elected Speaker of the House, the candidate in opposition being Mr. Pitkin of Connecticut, who together with Randolph and Quincy voiced the most hostile enmity to the

embargo and to the proclamation of war. Quincy still spoke with great bitterness, not only for himself but for his party and section. Clay he found "bold, aspiring, presumptuous, with a rough, overbearing eloquence, neither exact nor comprehensive, which he had cultivated in the contests with the half-civilized wranglers in the county courts of Kentucky, and quickened into confidence and readiness by successful declamations at barbecues and electioneering struggles."¹

The proposal to invade Canada with a possible view to its annexation, hinted at by Henry Clay, he denounced as "cruel, wanton, senseless and wicked." The men about him reminded him of "the giant in the legends of infancy,

" 'Fee, faw, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Dead or alive I will have some.' "

He expressed, he said, "the disgust of all New England." There was mildness indeed in the allusion to "very young politicians, their pin feathers not yet grown" in comparison with some remarks of Mr. Quincy as he further developed his discourse. "It is not for a man whose ancestors have been planted in this country now for almost two centuries," he said in passion; "it is not for a man who has a family, and friends, and character, and children, and a deep stake in the soil . . . to hesitate or swerve a hair's breadth from his country's purpose and true interests because of the yelpings, the howlings and snarlings of that hungry

¹ Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy*, p. 255.

pack which corrupt men keep directly or indirectly in pay with the view of hunting down every man who dares develop their purposes—a pack composed, it is true, of some native curs, but for the most part of hounds and spaniels of very recent importation, whose backs are seared by the lash, and whose necks are sore with the collars of their former masters.”

The cabinet for some time had been composed of “three Virginians and a foreigner” (Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Gallatin). Although it was Mr. Clay’s “untamed, ferocious tongue” which was detailed to reply to this speech,¹ the New Englander, when the discussion was done, still had a great advantage over his opponent in a reputation for the use of intemperate speech. While he had tongue or pen, Mr. Quincy wrote to his wife, “the ignorant part of the nation shall not assume to itself with impunity to lord it over the intelligent, nor the vicious over the virtuous.” Quincy accused Clay of leading a committee of “war hawks” to wait upon Madison, and to tell him that his endorsement of their policy would be the price of his being the party candidate in 1812.²

Randolph, when not denouncing the war and the party favoring it, was also badgering and taunting the Speaker. In a conversation with a friend, about this time, he said of Mr. Clay and Mr. Calhoun, who was a prominent member of the Committee on Foreign Relations: “They have entered the House

¹ Quincy, p. 296.

² *Ibid.*, p. 259; cf. Hunt, *Life of James Madison*, p. 316; Henry Adams, *Albert Gallatin*, p. 456.

with their eye on the presidency, and mark my words, sir, we shall have war before the end of the session.”¹ “It was as easy to go to war as to get a wife,” said this oftentimes half-mad but very able son of Virginia, “and many a poor blockhead had he seen strutting his hour because he had after vast exertion married a shrew.”² He insisted that it was an “anti-ministerial war,” one not more agreeable to the old Republicans than to the old Federalists; a thing for a new breed of “flaming patriots,” now clamoring for ascendancy at their country’s cost. Having offered a resolution that it was “inexpedient to resort to war with Great Britain,” he began at once to debate it, whereupon Clay put the question to the House whether it would proceed to the consideration of the resolution. The House declined to do so, and Randolph then received the first impulse to his intense dislike of Henry Clay, whose treatment of him in this instance was only such as would have been accorded any other member.³

For the first year of the war every possible untoward happening to the American arms seems to have befallen them. On the 29th of August General William Henry Harrison, who had been made a brigadier-general in the American army, wrote the following letter to Henry Clay:

“*Cincinnati, August 29, 1812.*

“I write to you, my dear sir, amid a thousand interruptions, and I do it solely for the purpose of

¹ Garland, *Life of Randolph*, Vol. I, p. 306.

² *Annals of Congress* for 1811–1812, p. 713.

³ Garland, *Life of Randolph*, Vol. I, p. 299.

showing you that you are present to my recollection under circumstances that would almost justify a suspension of every private feeling. The rumored disasters upon our northwestern frontier are now ascertained to be correct. The important point of Mackinac was surrendered without an effort; an army captured at Detroit after receiving three shots from a distant battery of the enemy (and from the range of which it was easy to retire); a fort (Chicago) in the midst of hostile tribes of Indians, ordered to be evacuated, and the garrison slaughtered; the numerous northwestern tribes of Indians (with the exception of two feeble ones) in arms against us, is the distressing picture which presents itself to view in this part of the country.

“To remedy all these misfortunes, I have an army competent in numbers, and in spirit equal to any that Greece or Rome ever boasted of, but destitute of artillery, of many necessary equipments, and absolutely ignorant of every military evolution; nor have I but a single individual capable of assisting me in training them. But I beg you to believe, my dear sir, that this retrospect of my situation, far from producing despondency, produces a contrary effect and I feel confident of being able to surmount them all.

“The grounds of this confidence are a reliance on my own zeal and perseverance, and a perfect conviction that no such materials for forming an invincible army ever existed as the volunteers which have marched from Kentucky on the present occasion. . . .”

On the next day General Harrison wrote a second letter to Mr. Clay as follows :

“ Cincinnati, August 30, 1812.

“MY DEAR SIR :

“After having been absent from home for so many months, you will no doubt think it unreason-

able that you should be asked to take a considerable journey, and that on an occasion entirely foreign to your ordinary public duties. I know you, however, too well not to believe that sacrifices of private convenience will be always made to render service to your country. Without further preamble then I inform you that, in my opinion, your presence on the frontier of this state would be productive of great advantages. I can assure you that your advice and assistance in determining the course of operations for the army (to the command of which I have been designated by your recommendation) will be highly useful. You are not only pledged in some manner for my conduct, but for the success of the war. For God's sake, then, come on to Piqua as quickly as possible, and let us endeavor to throw off from the administration that weight of reproach which the late disasters will heap upon them. If you come, bring on McKee with you, whom you will overtake upon the road. An extract from this letter will be authority for the commanding officer of his regiment to let him come." ¹

Since General Harrison was so anxious for the presence of Henry Clay near the field of action, it is not to be wondered at that President Madison had at one time determined to send the Speaker's name to the Senate for the office of major-general. In the opinion of Albert Gallatin, there was no man so "prompt and fruitful in expedients for an exigency." It is said that Mr. Madison was dissuaded from his purpose only by the statement of the fact that there was no one who could fill his place in the national councils, a statement which no thoughtful mind would have tried to controvert. Henry Clay was the impelling spirit of the war with

¹ *Private Correspondence of Henry Clay*, pp. 20-22.

Great Britain. The country at large, barring an element in New England, was strongly in its favor, knowing that for years our government had made every endeavor to effect an amicable arrangement of the differences, that all such attempts had been treated with scorn, and then contemptuously rejected, and that the indignity of the Orders in Council, as well as the impressment into foreign service of American seamen, was continued in full force against our country. A vast majority of the people of the United States felt, therefore, that a settlement by negotiation was absolutely futile. While it was true that the Orders in Council had been revoked at about the time of the declaration of war, it was equally true that the revocation of those orders was not made because of American protests. Anyhow, there remained the impressment of our seamen, and the unpaid claim for the loss of our shipping, the latter no small sum, when it is considered that more than nine hundred American ships had been destroyed by England during her war with Napoleon, while she most arbitrarily imposed certain restrictive laws against neutral powers, and carried her dictum into effect.

Henry Clay's impassioned appeals to his countrymen, his logical recital and clear presentation of the facts of England's transgressions upon American rights, especially in the matter of the impressment of American seamen, which he considered the most flagrant of her self-authorized acts against this nation, had a wide-spread influence. They exerted a powerful effect in Congress, where they were delivered, and thrilled the people of the West and

South, inspiring a patriotic ardor against which the opposition of Quincy, Randolph and Pitkin had but a local effect, though it may be noted that the governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut refused to allow the militia to leave their states, in pursuance of a requisition made by the President under the authority of an act of Congress, alleging the requisition to be unconstitutional. Henry Clay was the most strenuous advocate of his party for preparation for war with Great Britain, and that war was the war of the young members of Congress. They even found it necessary to go to President Madison and urge and persuade him to act with greater promptness ; he must, said they, relinquish all expectation of securing peace through negotiation.

The Speaker's chair, with the authority of that position in Congress, was largely delegated to another, while Clay with untiring energy was pleading for action, and justifying every move made toward that end. He determined that the aggressions of Great Britain should cease ; that American commerce should no longer be restrained by Great Britain ; and that merely the proclamation of that country that certain ports of France, with which power she was at war, were closed against neutral nations, gave her the right to destroy American shipping for the infraction of this prohibition, which rested on her proclamation alone, should no longer be tolerated by the United States. Clay held that no abridgment of the free trade of the United States with other nations should be permitted to be exercised by Great Britain ; that

this country should no longer submit to the impressment of our seamen by Great Britain, her claim to do which he said was "the assertion of an erroneous principle, and of a practice not conformable to the asserted principle, a principle which if it were theoretically right must be forever practically wrong, a practice which can obtain countenance from no principle whatever, and to submit to which, on our part, would betray the most abject degradation." We are told, said he, "that England is a proud and lofty nation, which, disdaining to wait for danger, meets it half-way. Haughty as she is, we once triumphed over her, and if we do not listen to the counsels of timidity and despair, we shall again prevail. In such a cause, with the aid of Providence, we must come out crowned with success ; but if we fail, let us fail like men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together in one common struggle, fighting for free trade and seamen's rights."

Always restively active in matters in which he was interested, Henry Clay was particularly so during the year 1813. In one way or another he was furthering the war with all the enthusiasm of his patriotic nature, an enthusiasm which the disasters to American arms had no effect in diminishing.

Men like Randolph and Quincy were left at home by their constituents as the military ardor swept the country and put them out of sympathy with the popular cause. They now had the time to write letters to each other and to congratulate themselves that they were no longer "under the abject do-

minion of Mr. H. Clay & Co.”¹ Mr. Clay’s command of the political situation was quite absolute, and he had won it fairly at the early age of thirty-five, by his gifts of public speech and by his reasoning faculties which had been so skilfully and industriously employed in behalf of a movement calculated to win the applause of the great mass of the people.

Because of the unfortunate course of affairs in the field, however, and the determined opposition of New England, President Madison and his advisers were quite willing to listen to the Czar of Russia’s suggestion of peace when it came, through his minister at Washington, early in 1813. Albert Gallatin, who could no longer make himself useful in the Treasury Department, and Senator James A. Bayard, an excellent old Federalist of Delaware, were asked to join John Quincy Adams, our Minister to Russia at St. Petersburg, and await developments.

So eager had the President been to set his envoys about their task that he had not thought to get from Great Britain an expression of her views. It was soon learned that mediation was not desired by her, and that the Russian emperor’s interposition was quite gratuitous. Nevertheless, she expressed a willingness to discuss the terms of a possible peace at a city of her own selection, preferably London or Gottenburg, in Sweden, though the place of meeting was later changed to Ghent, in the Netherlands. When these facts became known to President Madison, he added to the commission the names of

¹ Randolph to Quincy, June 20, 1813. Quincy’s *Life*, p. 332.

Jonathan Russell, then the American Minister to Sweden, and Henry Clay, making it a body of five members.

Clay resigned the speakership on January 14, 1814, and set off to join his colleagues. Great Britain's envoys, three in number, kept the Americans waiting for about a month, but at the end of that time all were upon the scene. The negotiations began in August. Mr. Clay continued to represent in diplomacy the policies which had engaged his attention as a leader in Congress, and in much the same manner. If we may judge from John Quincy Adams's journal, he was still the leader of young America, full of the bounding spirit of the West. Enthusiastically national, rather impatient of diplomatic restraints, belligerent in the face of contradiction, he was a factor of the greatest importance in the councils of the commission. He was the fighting antithesis of John Quincy Adams, steeped in the Puritan traditions of New England, confident in his learning and tenacious of the niceties of speech and behavior to which he had been bred. The able Gallatin was the peacemaker, soothing and allaying their differences when they seemed so great as almost to preclude reconciliation.

Mr. Adams found in the young Kentuckian a "harsh, angry and overbearing tone." "It always offends me in him," Mr. Adams wrote in his diary one day, in December, 1814, though he thought that being sometimes not free from this himself he should excuse it, "as the involuntary effusion of a too positive temper."¹ Clay vigorously

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 103.

defended the Western, which was the larger American view of the war, and set forth what his section was to gain by the treaty. The very surprising demands of Great Britain that peace should be concluded by the grant of a large territory south of the Great Lakes, to be occupied by the Indians under British guaranty ; the relinquishment of the right of the United States to keep armed vessels on the Lakes ; the cession of a strip of Maine, over which to construct a road from Halifax to Quebec ; and the renewal of the English right to navigate the Mississippi, which had been enjoyed before 1783, were not acceptable to any commissioner. When, however, it was a question of which particular provisions should be accepted by way of compromise, there was a great contest between Massachusetts and Kentucky, between the East and the West. The proposal to introduce an article giving the United States the right to fish and cure fish in British jurisdiction as a *quid pro quo* for the right to navigate the Mississippi at once aroused the lion in Clay. The fisheries were no return for such a privilege, he declared with stirring emphasis. He always "lost his temper," says Mr. Adams, when this subject was discussed.

It was argued in vain that any surrender of fishing rights, or of the territory of Maine, "would give a handle to the party there, now pushing for a separation from the Union and for a New England confederacy." Clay retorted that "there was no use in trying to conciliate people who would not be conciliated. There might at some future day be a party for separation in the Western states also.

The government too often sacrificed the interests of its best friends for those of its bitterest enemies.”¹ Mr. Clay declared that “he would do nothing to satisfy disaffection and treason ; he would not yield anything for the sake of them.”² When the commissioners had under discussion an article giving the British the right to trade with the Indians, he walked up and down the room, repeating five or six times, “I will never sign a treaty upon the *status ante bellum* with the Indian article, so help me God.”³ Thus did the discussions of the commissioners proceed with a good deal of the rough and tumble of a legislative chamber, Gallatin now and again bringing “all to unison by a joke.”⁴

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 72.

² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴ Something concerning the relations subsisting between the commissioners may be gleaned from these words which are contained in a long letter written by Jonathan Russell to Mr. Clay from Stockholm on October 15, 1815 :

“ If the individual thus sought [John Quincy Adams] should be a kind of laborious pedant without judgment enough to be useful, or taste sufficient to be admired ; who is suspected of forgetting his country in the pursuit of little personal or family interests ; and who is known frequently to forget himself in a paroxysm of unmanageable passion ; who had had the virtue to mask his participation in the resentments of his father under the affectation of patriotism ; and the patriotism to desert his party when it had lost its power ; who adopts the most extravagant opinions in the hectic of the moment and defends them with obstinacy and vehemence while the fever lasts and thus reduces himself to the miserable alternative of being constantly absurd or ridiculously inconsistent ; who has neither dignity to command nor address to persuade and is therefore as unqualified to rule others as he is to govern himself ; who believes the national prosperity to consist in the prosperity of a district and circumscribes his love of country within the confines of the state in which he was born ; who would barter the patriotic blood of the West for blubber and exchange ultra-Alleghany scalps for cod-fish,” etc., etc.

Finally, the day before Christmas, 1814, an agreement with the British representatives was reached and the peace was concluded. It was not on terms very heroic for the United States. Nothing was said in the treaty about the right of search, the impressment of sailors and the freedom of international commerce. "Free Trade and Seamen's Rights," for which the war had been begun and waged, were quietly passed over. The country's gain had not been as great as many, and Mr. Clay preëminently, had desired; but he had the joy of knowing that he had had a hand in bringing to naught the preposterous demands with which Great Britain had begun the negotiations. Whatever real disappointment was felt because of the result was assuaged by Jackson's impressive victory at New Orleans, in a battle fought, it is true, after peace had been signed, though before the news of it had reached America.

Mr. Clay, after completing his tasks at Ghent, was instructed to visit London with Adams and Gallatin to see if the work just ended could not be supplemented by a treaty of commerce. He was loath to do so, and lingered for a time in Paris. After he learned of the victory at New Orleans, he exclaimed, "Now I can go to England without mortification," and he crossed the Channel. Nothing of material benefit to the United States, however, was obtained by negotiations covering three months' time. He reached home in September, 1815, after an absence of about eighteen months, and possibly barring the triumphant Jackson, found himself the hero of the war. Upon stepping ashore in New

York, he was dined by a distinguished company of citizens, and his progress to Lexington was a series of ovations. On October 7th, he was the guest at a public dinner in his own little city in Kentucky. His friends gathered to honor him. Toasts were proposed to—

“Our negotiators at Ghent: their talents have kept pace with the valor of our arms, in demonstrating to the enemy that these states will be free.”

“Our guest, Henry Clay: we welcome his return to that country whose rights and interests he has so ably maintained at home and abroad.”

One of his florid biographers asserts that his reception in Kentucky was “like that of a dutiful and affectionate son in the long and passionate embrace of a beloved mother.”¹ His speech to his admirers, it may be objected, was still that of a jingo, but he had the facts on his side. There had been tremendous gain in the strengthening of a national sense at home, and the enforcement of respect for the republic abroad. Great Britain had never quite relinquished her hope of regaining the territory she had lost on this continent by the Revolution. As late as 1860, she still regarded the country as a loose union of contentious states of a highly primitive nature. Mr. Clay spoke truly at Lexington:

“Abroad our character, which at the time of its [the war’s] declaration was in the lowest state of degradation, is raised to the highest point of elevation. It is impossible for any American to visit Europe without being sensible of this agreeable change, in the personal attentions which he receives,

¹ Mallory, Vol. I, pp. 86-87.

in the praises which are bestowed on our past exertions, and the predictions which are made as to our future prospects. At home a government, which, at its formation, was apprehended by its best friends, and pronounced by its enemies to be incapable of standing the shock, is found to answer all the purposes of its institution. . . . Our prospects for the future are of the brightest kind."

Thus was the way prepared for Clay immediately to enter that course of public life, for the enrichment and aggrandizement of the country by a vigorous domestic policy with which he became so prominently identified during the ensuing thirty years. Old leaders and old parties left the stage; Clay, Webster, Calhoun and Benton came on.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTRUCTIVE POLICIES

THAT Mr. Clay now had his eyes set upon the presidency has been assumed by his principal biographers.¹ Indeed, it was constantly said of him during his lifetime that his ambitions warped his views and shaped his policies. It has been remarked, with very great truth, that characteristics in Clay, fancied or real, would always be brought forward to his disadvantage, while similar traits in others did not occasion even passing comment.² According to the American theory of government,

¹ Compare Schurz, for instance.

² "It has been objected to Henry Clay that he was ambitious. So he was. But in him ambition was a virtue. It sought only the proper, fair objects of honorable ambition, and it sought these by honorable means only—by so serving the country as to deserve its favors, and its honors. If he sought office, it was for the purpose of enabling him by the power it would give to serve his country more effectually and preëminently, and, if he expected and desired thereby to advance his own fame, who will say that it was a fault? Who will say that it was a fault to seek and desire office for any of the personal gratifications it may afford, so long as those gratifications are made subordinate to the public good?"

"That Henry Clay's object in desiring office was to serve his country, and that he would have made all other objects subservient, I have no doubt. I knew him well. I had full opportunity of observing him, his most unguarded moments and conversations, and I can say that I have never known a more unselfish, a more faithful and intrepid representative of the people, of the people's rights, and the people's interests, than Henry Clay."—From *Address on the Life and Death of Henry Clay*, by John J. Crittenden.

it is a laudable desire for a man to entertain a wish to be President. It was formerly a more familiar ambition than in these days, and each male child was encouraged in the thought that he might at some future day sit in the White House. Clay's interests and talents, the appreciation that he merited and received and the great prominence which he attained naturally led him to hope, and indeed expect, that he might at length be the choice of the nation for a post many times occupied during his life by men vastly inferior to him in every essential particular.

Quite plainly one of these was James Monroe, who came to the office in succession to James Madison, and whose Secretary of State Mr. Clay may have thought that he should have been upon his return from Ghent. Madison had asked him to take the Russian mission and then to become Secretary of War. Monroe repeated the offer of the War portfolio and the mission to England, but chose as his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, thus in so far as tradition and precedent could avail indicating Mr. Adams for the successorship in the presidential office. The step from the State Department to the White House was regularly taken in this period of the country's history.

Mr. Adams, in point of accomplishments and experience, was rather clearly marked out for this distinction, and it is by no means fair to suppose that Mr. Clay's future course in opposition to several administration policies was prompted by any personal chagrin. It is natural to think that he preferred the "give and take" and the jostle of a legislative body where his preëminent powers as an orator

caused him to shine before the world. His position as Speaker of the House, to which he was returned in December, 1815, his friends and neighbors in Kentucky having immediately reelected him to Congress, was one of great influence and he could have found very little in the cabinet or a foreign mission to compensate for the enjoyment which came to him from active part in parliamentary life.

The Republican majorities in both branches of Congress were overwhelming. The Federalists had been almost obliterated by their unpopular policy in combating the war, and it was the task of Clay, with other young men, to prepare the way for a realignment of parties. It is very likely true that he did not have the philosophical backgrounds for a work of this kind, and to say that his course was not always a consistent one is easy. Nevertheless, he rapidly formulated his views and was soon in a fair way either to reform the Republican party upon lines of his own making, or to constitute himself the leader of a new party. With Jackson coming forward as the heir to Republicanism, which soon assumed the more popular name of Democracy, it was his destiny to take the alternative course and assist at the birth of the Whig party, which became the natural inheritor of the loose-constructionist view of the Constitution. His constructive policies in regard to the upbuilding of native industries, the development of our internal resources by the making of roads and canals and through other means, his pleas for the national defense, marked him as a man who held the nation above the state and the sense above the letter of the Constitution. He hewed his

way with marked determination, and with few lapses in that virtue, so highly esteemed in political life, consistency. His imagination, which led him to picture glowing scenes, the fine periods which he could so well use in the description of them to others, effectually marked him for the constructive side in politics and until the end this was his course, interrupted as it was only by his famous services employed again and again in pacifying the sections in the slavery dispute, growing more ominous year by year.

Now that the war was at an end, it would have been truly Jeffersonian, if he had still been a follower of the leader whom he acknowledged when he began his political life, to have been an advocate of a reduction of taxation. This he could not be. He had visions of a greater nation and he wished it to be defended against future wars. Not only would he maintain the present augmented naval and land forces, but he would still further increase them. He favored the construction of military roads and canals and steam batteries for the Mississippi and the Chesapeake. "In short," said he, "I would act seriously, effectually act, on the principle that in peace we ought to prepare for war."

But this was only a part of what he wished the government to be. It must undertake "the great work too long delayed of internal improvement," which was to include "a chain of turnpike roads and canals from Passamaquoddy to New Orleans." He also announced a policy which would "effectually protect our manufactories," and "not so much for the sake of the manufacturers themselves, as for

the general interest." "Let us now do something to ameliorate the internal condition of the country," said he to his friends in the House. "Let us show that objects of domestic no less than of foreign policy, receive our attention."¹

These policies were supplemented by another, the establishment of a national bank, to put to rights the disordered currency system, and to make the government an efficient agency in the important work of internal upbuilding, which Mr. Clay so eloquently advocated. It is true, and much was made of this by his foes, that, while a member of the Senate in 1811, he had opposed the renewal of the bank's charter, largely it would seem because he believed it to be a foreign corporation; *i. e.*, a corporation whose stock was principally owned abroad. It stood in the way of his plans for the War of 1812. On the constitutional issue he had been wrong on that occasion rather than now, because a bank fitted perfectly into his system of politics. He had the wisdom to see this and the courage to announce a change of his attitude on the question. "He preferred to the suggestions of the pride of consistency the evident interests of the community, and determined to throw himself upon their candor and justice."²

Little weight need be given to the consideration that in 1811 the legislature of Kentucky had directed him to oppose the bank, while in 1816 the popular sentiment of his state seemed to favor it. Possibly in 1811 this fact may have had its influence with

¹ Colton, *Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, Vol. V, pp. 98-99.

² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

him, since he was then a young man. Now he was a leader who was well above the need of receiving instructions from any local source. The plain truth seems to be that Mr. Clay was now his natural self, and when he fully understood the part which one of his type of mind was to play in our politics, he deviated very slightly from the indicated way. His changes were as nothing compared, for example, with Webster's on the tariff question and on the 7th of March, 1850, and those which altered the entire complexion of John C. Calhoun as a public man.¹

The session resulted in a charter being granted for twenty years to the Second Bank of the United States, which served its useful purposes to the nation until the period expired, when, arousing all the elemental ire of Jackson, it was swept away. The protective tariff and the internal improvement features of the Young Republican programme were developed with the same rapidity and with practically little opposition. George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania, the Secretary of the Treasury, voicing the industrial ambitions of his state, proposed a scheme of duties, which in all its substantial parts became the Tariff Law of 1816. Clay, Calhoun and their friends quoted the arguments of Hamilton on the subject of protection against the Federalists, who were now so far out of accord with their own history that they were opposing the policy.

No other definite plan presenting itself on the subject of internal improvements, Clay took up the advocacy of a bill to set apart the proceeds of the United States' connection with the national bank as

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 108; Hunt, *Calhoun*, pp. 318-320.

a fund for the construction of roads and canals, and the improvement of navigation on internal water-courses. This sum would include the bonus paid to the government by the bank as the price of its existence, and the dividends on the shares held by the United States. The measure was justified on constitutional grounds because it would forward interstate commerce, and facilitate the common defense. In his speech on February 4, 1817, Clay said he had "long thought" that there were "no two subjects which could engage the attention of the national legislature more worthy of its deliberate consideration, than those of internal improvements and domestic manufactures." He now had in mind the improvement of navigation at the rapids in the Ohio River, a canal from the Hudson River to the Great Lakes and a turnpike road to parallel the Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida. He was delighted to know of the early prospect of the completion of a good highway for wagons between Baltimore and the Ohio, and the consequent reduction of time consumed in the journey from eight to three days. Similar benefits would follow wherever this "species of improvement" should be effected. As to the constitutionality of the course, it need not be pressed at this time. The fund could be created, and when it had accumulated, if in the view of Congress its expenditure were adjudged the part of wisdom in the light of constitutional considerations, that policy might be pursued. The old Virginians, however, representing the strict constructionist view of the government inherited from the eighteenth century, wholly distrusted the advice of the younger

Republicans on this subject, and Madison vetoed the bill, the last act of his official career.¹

Monroe made no concealment of his hostility to a similar measure, if it should be offered in Congress, and his first message contained a denial of any such constitutional right. To a man like Clay a statement of this kind was a challenge, and he had nothing to surrender on the point so long as he lived. Reëlected to the speakership, he still was able in Committee of the Whole to develop his ideas fully and eloquently. On March 13, 1818, he spoke at much length upon a measure essentially the same as that which had been vetoed by President Madison. This was thought to be the best speech which Clay had made up to that time, and it marked him as an able expounder of constitutional questions, a field into which he had not yet very far proceeded. He now boldly took issue with Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, and those theories which they represented in the President's office for twenty-four years. He "utterly despaired" of any amendment to the Constitution which these three Executives, one after another, had recommended to the advocates of internal improvements. As for himself, he believed the power already to rest with Congress. Its existence he held "as of the first importance, not merely to the preservation of the Union of the States, paramount as that consideration ever should be over all others, but to the prosperity of every great interest of the country—agriculture, manufactures, commerce, in peace and in war."

The power to make roads and canals was needed,

¹ Hunt, *Madison*, p. 360.

said Clay, "to distribute the intelligence, force and production of the country through all its parts." This was the declaration of a statesman of imagination who had ideals for the nation above those to be obtained from any literal reading of the words and phrases of the Constitution. He plainly said that no maker of constitutions could "foresee and provide specifically for all contingencies." "Man and his language," he continued, "are both imperfect. Hence the existence of construction and constructive powers. Hence, also, the rule that a grant of the end is a grant of the means. If you amend the Constitution a thousand times, the same imperfection of our nature and our language will attend our new works."

In discussing the theory of state rights, as it was held in Virginia, and as it had more lately revealed itself in Massachusetts, in reference to the War of 1812, Mr. Clay said: "No man deprecates more than I do the idea of consolidation; yet between separation and consolidation, painful as would be the alternative, I would greatly prefer the latter." Always exhibiting in his speeches a profitable reading of ancient history, he referred to the value of military roads to "those great masters of the world," the Romans, who thus sustained their power for so many centuries, "diffusing law and liberty and intelligence all around them." He thought that if there were "no other monument remaining of the sagacity and of the illustrious deeds of the unfortunate captive of St. Helena, that the road from Hamburg to Basle would perpetuate his memory to future ages." Concluding, Mr. Clay said: "Of

all the modes in which a government can employ its surplus revenue, none is more permanently beneficial than that of internal improvement. Fixed to the soil, it becomes a desirable part of the land itself, diffusing comfort, and activity, and animation on all sides." This speech was an excellent evidence of Clay's oratory at this fruitful period in his leadership. It was "this enthusiastic conception of national grandeur, this lofty unionism, constantly appearing as the inspiration of his public conduct," as Mr. Schurz says, which "gave to his policies, as they stood forth in the glow of his eloquence, a peculiarly potent charm."

While to some it may have seemed a daring thing for Mr. Clay to express himself in such a sense, in opposition to the teachings of men who had sat in the constitutional convention, and projected its wisdom into the new century, he was not deterred by any such considerations. Mr. Schurz finds in the young Kentuckian's criticism of Monroe a discreditable personal motive. Mr. Clay was quite justified in stating a difference of opinion with the President, if he felt it to be of advantage to the discussion. Undoubtedly Mr. Monroe himself was very much disturbed by Mr. Clay's hostility, since he had made every effort to conciliate the powerful Speaker of the House. The President's porter was instructed to admit Mr. Clay at all times, even when the cabinet was in session, and once (prior to November 23, 1817) when he had declined the servant's invitation, Mr. Monroe came out in person, and brought him into the council.¹ Secre-

¹ Mrs. Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, p. 141.

tary of State Adams also took umbrage at Mr. Clay's conduct, seeing in it intrigue with reference to the presidency at the next election, supposed to be assured to him.¹

In still another way did Clay appear to Monroe to be a gadfly upon his flank, and this was in connection with the government's policy in South America. There is little doubt that Clay's course in this matter was bred of sincere, though somewhat youthfully enthusiastic sympathy for the Spanish American peoples. As he gave rein to his imagination he rose to heights of declamation which seem not to have been warranted by all the facts. It was, however, a policy suggested by a liberal heart and, knowing his character, we cannot very well conceive of his being silent on this subject. Incidentally, it was an excellent opportunity for the display of his eloquence, and serves to entrench him in his position as one of the great orators of the age. He had said in the West Florida speech in the Senate in 1810, "I have no commiseration for princes; my sympathies are reserved for the great mass of mankind;" and now he burst out in a flood of impassioned eloquence, in behalf of the American subjects of Spain, struggling for their independence.

The wars had been in progress for several years. They were waged tediously with many of those horrors, reports of which led to the awakening of our sympathies in regard to the Cubans eighty years later. The leaders of the insurgents were inspired by the example of the people of the United States in gaining their independence of the overlordship of

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. IV, pp. 64, 66.

Europe. The proposal which Clay now advocated was recognition by the American government of the so-called United Provinces of Rio de la Plata, to which he wished us to dispatch a minister. Commissioners had been sent to South America to investigate the condition of affairs, and the administration was not unmindful of the situation in that part of the globe and of the obligations of the United States toward neighboring peoples who were straining every nerve to gain their liberties. The speech which Clay delivered on this subject on March 24, 1818, to use his biographer Colton's words, "came down with tremendous effect" on the House of Representatives, on the country at large, on the Spanish Provinces, on Spain herself, and on all Europe. "It was republican America from Cape Horn to Hudson's Bay against monarchical Europe from the Mediterranean to Finland, that suddenly started up before the surprised imaginations of men."¹

Clay had had war in view when he had formulated his policies upon his return from the mission to Ghent. He would not foment or urge it, but he wished the nation so to strengthen itself that it could at all times upon all subjects pursue a course of righteousness, undeterred by considerations affecting the conduct of other powers as a result of this course. He now stated his aversion to war with Spain, although she had given "abundant and just cause." He had seen enough of it and nothing could make him think that it was else than a "dreadful scourge." Nevertheless, he had views

¹ Vol. V, p. 137.

which he was bound to express, and the government had duties which it was obliged to perform. "In the establishment of the independence of Spanish America," he said, "the United States have the deepest interest. I have no hesitation in asserting my firm belief that there is no question in the foreign policy of this country which has ever arisen, or which I can conceive as ever occurring in the decision of which we have had, or can have so much at stake. This interest concerns our politics, our commerce, our navigation. There cannot be a doubt that Spanish America once independent, whatever may be the form of the governments established in the several parts, these governments will be animated by an American feeling and guided by an American policy."

He adverted to the charge that the people were too ignorant and too superstitious to admit of the existence of free government. "I deny the alleged fact of ignorance," said he. "I deny the inference from that fact, if it were true, that they want capacity for free government ; and I refuse assent to the further conclusion, if the fact were true, that we are to be indifferent to their fate." He scorned the view of those who said that in the independence of Spanish America we should meet a great rival in agricultural productions. "There is something so narrow, and selfish, and groveling in this argument if founded in fact," said he, "something so unworthy the magnanimity of a great and generous people that I confess I have scarcely patience to notice it."

"We are," the orator continued, "the natural head of the American family. I would not inter-

meddle in the affairs of Europe. We wisely keep aloof from their broils. I would not even intermeddle in those of other parts of America, further than to exert the incontestable rights appertaining to us as a free, sovereign and independent power ; and I contend that the accrediting of a minister from the new republic is such a right. We are bound to receive their minister, if we mean to be really neutral. If the royal belligerent is represented and heard at our government, the republican belligerent ought also to be heard."

Four days later, on March 28th, Mr. Clay again entered the discussion with a speech which was indeed but in continuation of the first one. He dwelt upon our own Revolutionary history and sought to bring South America's condition home to the sympathies of his hearers. He spoke of his old tutor, Chancellor Wythe, and appealed to the patriots of '76 before him. Many portions of the speech were steeped in irony, of which few men were in fuller command. He had heard of a proposal to send a minister to Constantinople. It was an opportunity for him to say : "Yes, sir, from Constantinople or from the Brazils ; from Turk or Christian ; from black or white ; from the Bey of Algiers or the Bey of Tunis ; from the devil himself, if he wore a crown, we should receive a minister. We even paid the expenses of the minister of his sublime highness, the Bey of Tunis, and thought ourselves highly honored by the visit. But let the minister come from a poor republic, like that of La Plata, and we turn our back on him. The brilliant costumes of the ministers of the royal governments are seen glisten-

ing in the circles of our drawing-rooms and their splendid equipages rolling through the avenues of the metropolis ; but the unaccredited minister of the republic if he visit our President, or Secretary of State at all, must do it incognito, lest the eye of Don Onís [the Spanish minister] should be offended by so unseemly a sight."

Ministers had been exchanged with the Brazils. "The one, however, is a kingdom, the other a republic ; and if any gentleman can assign any other better reason why a minister should be sent to one and not to the other of these powers, I shall be glad to hear it disclosed, for I have not been able myself to discover it." "All the patriots ask," said he, "all they want at our hands, is to be recognized as, what they have been for the last eight years, an independent power."

Mr. Clay's amendment was lost in the House by a vote of 115 to 45, but he did not abandon the cause of the South Americans, who were translating his speeches into Spanish, reading them to their armies, incorporating his name in their patriotic songs, voting him their thanks and in other ways sending him evidences of their gratitude for the aid which he sought to give them in their extremity.¹ He was now confirmed in his title as the "Great Commoner," a name which clung to him through

¹ In 1827 General Bolívar wrote to Henry Clay, thanking him for his brilliant services in behalf of the South Americans, and about a year later Clay replied to the letter. Meantime he had had reason to doubt the motives of Bolívar which had once seemed so pure. He spoke of the "ambitious designs" of the Colombian leader which had caused him "great solicitude" and suggested to him that he prefer "the true glory of our immortal Washington." Mallory, Vol. I, pp. 99-100.

life, the friend of poor, struggling humanity at home and abroad.

In the next Congress he again brought up the question of recognizing the South Americans. By this time the frame of the public mind had improved. Mr. Monroe and Mr. Adams seemed to be more favorable to action, and in 1820 Mr. Clay's resolution passed the House by a vote of eighty to seventy-five. The administration was still unmoved, however, and in February, 1821, Clay brought forward a resolution embodying a similar view which was again approved by the House. He was the chairman of a committee to visit the President, and officially make known the action of the House;¹ but it was not until March 8, 1822 (more than eighteen months prior to the announcement of the Doctrine, afterward become so famous) that Monroe, believing the proper hour had arrived, sent a message to Congress, recommending the recognition by the United States of the Spanish American Republics. It met with prompt response. Clay's motives on any subject seldom escaped unhappy questioning, but here at least he ought to be credited with sincerity. They came "straight from his generous impulses."²

Clay's sympathies for all ranks of mankind were predominant again when he reviewed in so notable a way the extraordinary and lawless behavior of General Jackson in the Floridas, with reference to the Seminole Indians. He perhaps may not have

¹ For Adams's views at this time see *Memoirs*, Vol. V, pp. 324-325.

² Schurz, p. 168.

before fathomed the "military hero's" power in a democracy ; he may not have realized how, do what he might constitutionally or unconstitutionally, a successful warrior can occupy and dominate the popular fancy. Again, if there was thought that the American people could choose such a leader in preference to men of so much more poise, refinement and true ability in the management of civil affairs, he may not have reckoned with Jackson's singularly unforgiving heart. If he had been informed beforehand of all these things, however, it is fair to think that Mr. Clay's course would have been unchanged. Not one word did he speak unfeelingly and while assailing Jackson at some points, with all the vigor that can be put into speech, it was done with so much oratorical grace as compared with criticisms passed in Congress by one public man upon another, at a later day, that it should not have led to that outburst of malignity on the part of Jackson and his friends which pursued Clay until his death.

Jackson had raised troops in Tennessee without authority ; he entered Florida, then still belonging to Spain, to pursue Indians who from that vantage-point raided settlements under jurisdiction of the United States. In the spring of 1818 he captured the Spanish fort of St. Mark's, hanged Indian chiefs, lured into his net by methods outside the pale of civilized warfare ; court-martialed two British subjects, Arbuthnot and Ambrister, who were found with the Indians and were accused of instigating them to outrage, and shot them to death ; seized Pensacola, deposed the governor and left an Ameri-

can garrison at the old Spanish post. Such high-handed proceedings created great amazement, except among the lower orders of men, always "for their country, right or wrong," especially when the policy involved the famous hero of New Orleans. The administration was obliged to disavow a part at least of Jackson's performances, and resolutions appeared in Congress condemning his course. A prolonged debate ensued and on January 20, 1819, it was known that Clay would speak. He was now the most admired orator on Capitol Hill. Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, who heard this speech, tells of the great effect which it produced :

"When I reached the Hall, it was so crowded that it was impossible to join my party. . . . The Senate had adjourned to hear Mr. Clay. All the foreign ministers and suites [and] many strangers were admitted to the floor [who] in addition to the members rendered the house crowded. The gallery was full of ladies, gentlemen and men, to a degree that endangered it. Even the outer entries were thronged and yet such silence prevailed that, though at a considerable distance, I did not lose a word. Mr. Clay was not only eloquent but amusing and more than once made the whole house laugh. . . . To hear the better I had seated myself on some steps quite out of sight of the house ; when Mr. Clay had finished, he came into the lobby for air and refreshment. The members crowded round him and I imagine by his countenance what they whispered must have been very agreeable. When he saw me he came and sat a few minutes on the steps by me, throwing himself most gracefully into a recumbent

posture. I told him I had come prepared to sit till evening and was disappointed at his speech being so short. He said he had intended to have spoken longer, but his voice had given out; he had begun too loud and soon exhausted himself. . . . The gentlemen are grown very gallant and attentive and as it was impossible to reach the ladies through the gallery, a new mode was invented of supplying them with oranges, etc. They tied them up in handkerchiefs, to which was fixed a note indicating for whom it was designed, and then fastened to a long pole. This was taken on the floor of the House and handed up to the ladies who sat in front of the gallery. I imagine there were near one hundred ladies there so that these presentations were frequent and quite amusing, even in the midst of Mr. Clay's speech. I and the ladies near me were more accessible and were more than supplied with oranges, cakes, etc."

In this notable address Mr. Clay took the gravest exception to Jackson's treatment of the Indians. He found the causes of the war in the general's Treaty of 1814, which he read and which he declared to be "utterly irreconcilable with those noble principles of generosity and magnanimity which I hope to see my country always exhibit, and particularly toward the miserable remnant of the aborigines." Its terms were "hard and unconscionable," and could not but soon lead to "greater exasperation and more ferocity" on the side of the "conquered party." There was no right "to practice under color of retaliation enormities on the Indians." "This was the first instance," he declared, "in the annals of the country." Even when we were weak and they

were comparatively strong we did not "destroy Indian captives, combatants or non-combatants" and bring to bear upon them "the bloody maxims of barbarous ages." As for the execution of Arbuthnot and Ambrister, a gentleman in the House had said that it was only the wrong mode of doing a right thing. "In what code of public law," said Clay, "in what system of ethics, nay, in what respectable novel, where if the gentleman were to take the range of the whole literature of the world will he find any sanction for a principle so monstrous?" Such procedure clearly pointed, he believed, to the end of free government. "Recall to your recollection the free nations which have gone before us. Where are they now?"

"Gone glimmering through the dream of things that were,
A schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour!"

And how have they lost their liberties?"

He eloquently pointed to the examples of Greece and Rome, and the disasters which befell them at the hands of military chieftains. He spoke of Bonaparte and then said: "I hope not to be misunderstood; I am far from intimating that General Jackson cherishes any designs inimical to the liberties of the country. I believe his intentions to be pure and patriotic. I thank God that he would not, but I thank Him still more that he could not, if he would, overturn the liberties of the republic. . . . We are fighting a great moral battle for the benefit not only of our country but of all mankind. . . . Do you expect to execute this high trust by trampling, or suffering to be trampled down law, justice,

the Constitution and the rights of the people? by exhibiting examples of inhumanity, and cruelty, and ambition? When the minions of despotism heard in Europe of the seizure of Pensacola, how did they chuckle and chide the admirers of our institutions? . . . Behold, said they, the conduct of those who are constantly reproaching kings. . . . Beware how you give a fatal sanction in this infant period of our republic, scarcely yet two score years old, to military insubordination. Remember that Greece had her Alexander, Rome her Cæsar, England her Cromwell, France her Bonaparte and that if we would escape the rock on which they split we must avoid their errors."¹

It was a brilliant piece of oratory but the House, by majorities ranging from thirty to forty-six, voted down the various resolutions expressive of its disapprobation of Jackson's course. He was still the hero that he had been, and indeed seemed to gain by this attempt, as many esteemed it, to put him in a bad light before the nation which he had leaped forward to serve.

A clear riddance of these border troubles with the Indians, and of the confusion of sovereignty arising from the efforts to control them, could be secured only by the acquisition of Florida, which was soon arranged for and brought before Congress for its sanction. Mr. Adams's efforts were declared to have been successful only a few weeks after Clay had delivered his ringing speech. The treaty excluded Texas from the ceded area. It was approved by the Senate but the King of Spain was slow to

¹ Influenced undoubtedly by memories of Patrick Henry.

give it his ratification, whereupon many were in favor of taking forcible possession of Florida. Monroe sent a message to Congress on the subject on March 27, 1820, and Clay entered the discussion with a speech which increased his renown at the time, and gave him the title to a gift of prophecy in later years. He asserted that Texas already belonged to the United States as a part of the Louisiana Purchase, and accused the administration of having made a very bad bargain with Spain when it had agreed to surrender the claim to this great territory in return for Florida.

And this was not all. Though he would not give Texas for Florida "in a naked exchange," we were bound by the treaty to pay \$5,000,000, claims upon Spain, amounting probably to three or four times that sum, and to make other considerations. Texas he declared to be "extremely valuable." "The climate was delicious, the soil fertile; the margins of the rivers abounding in live oak and the country admitting of easy settlement." Here was a great colony for us ready at hand contiguous in area. "The same Mississippi from whose rich deposit the best of them [Louisiana] had been formed," he said, "will transport on her bosom the brave, the patriotic men from her tributary streams to defend and preserve the next most valuable, the province of Texas." He had no wish to minimize the worth of Florida, though it was "incomparably less" than that of Texas. Moreover, enclosed by Alabama and Georgia, Florida could not escape, and five or ten years more or less would matter little to the United States. In this, too, did Clay fail, though he and

his admirers, when Texas must be repurchased for a large sum of money and by a war, could point with some interest to the policy which he had unavailingly advocated twenty-five years before. At length Spain ratified the treaty and it was proclaimed by President Monroe on Washington's Birthday, 1821.

Mr. Clay again spoke as the friend of struggling humanity on January 20, 1824, when a resolution came before the House of Representatives extending sympathy to the Greeks in their revolution against Turkey. The war was marked by great atrocities, and Daniel Webster, who sat in the House as a Federalist from Massachusetts, introduced a measure providing for the recognition of Greek independence by the appointment of a commissioner. Here again Clay followed the bent of his impulses, so charitably awakened, in reference to the South American states. In this speech the orator uttered some of his most impassioned measures. "Are we so humbled, so low, so debased," he asked, "that we dare not express our sympathy for suffering Greece; that we dare not articulate our detestation of the brutal excesses of which she has been the bleeding victim lest we might offend some one or more of their imperial and royal majesties? . . . Are we so mean, so base, so despicable that we may not attempt to express our horror, utter our indignation at the most brutal and atrocious war that ever stained earth, or shocked high heaven? At the ferocious deeds of a savage and infuriated soldiery, stimulated and urged on by the clergy of a fanatical and inimical religion and rioting in all the excesses

of blood and butchery, at the mere details of which the heart sickens and recoils?"

As for such action on the part of the United States tending "to whet the vengeance of the Turk against his Grecian victims," he did not believe it. "When he is made to understand," said Mr. Clay in a burst of eloquence, "that the Executive of this government is sustained by the representatives of the people; that our entire political future, base, column and entablature, rulers and people, with heart, soul, mind and strength are all on the side of the gallant people whom he would crush, he will be more likely to restrain than to increase his atrocities upon suffering and bleeding Greece."

Some he surmised might oppose the resolution because it had been offered by a Federalist. "If it were possible for Republicans to cease to be champions of human freedom," said he, "and if Federalists become its only supporters, I would cease to be a Republican; I would become a Federalist."

Though this resolution was never acted upon, the speech stamped Clay as the consistent advocate of suffering manhood in all parts of the earth, and whatever effect it may have had upon some minds, still more strongly entrenched him in the affections of his friends.

CHAPTER V

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE

THE first of that series of compromises of the issue between North and South on the slavery question, in the management of which Mr. Clay played so prominent a part, had to do with the admission of Missouri into the Union. Should it be a slave or a free state? Here Clay made a beginning as a public man in that class of activity which soon caused him to be called "the Great Pacificator." His power over the people in all portions of the country was enormous, and this, joined to his love of the Union and his parliamentary finesse, made him a leading influence in the work of temporarily composing the differences of the two sections. The service seems infinitely less important since the Civil War than it did before that event. Those who labored to avert the war have had to make way in our esteem for those who successfully directed and prosecuted it. It is Clay's fate, though he struggled manfully against disunion for thirty years, to be relegated to a far less important place in our history, as it is taught and understood by the average American, than is assigned to those who have gained our affections because it was their fortune to have a hand in the physical subjugation of slavery, and whose fighting was done upon the field of battle.

Mr. Clay's dislike of slavery could not have been else than real and great. His generous heart, full of sympathy for all the downtrodden and oppressed—South Americans, Indians and Greeks—made no exception of the blacks held as bond-servants in the South. We have seen that emancipation was one of the first subjects to engage his attention as a young man when he arrived in Kentucky from Virginia, and he said on January 20, 1827, at the annual meeting of the American Colonization Society in Washington: "If I could be instrumental in eradicating this deepest stain [slavery] from the character of our country, and removing all cause of reproach on account of it by foreign nations; if I could only be instrumental in ridding of this foul blot that revered state that gave me birth, or that no less beloved state which kindly adopted me as her son, I would not exchange the proud satisfaction which I should enjoy for the honor of all the triumphs ever decreed to the most successful conqueror."

He had started with Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Patrick Henry and the other Virginians, all of whom at this early day did not attempt to conceal the evils of slavery. He passed over to the advocacy of the colonization movement, which also claimed the sympathy of Lincoln, and was indeed at first a favorite plan of Benjamin Lundy and the Northern Abolitionists themselves. What his attitude became as the dispute waxed hotter and more furious we shall later see. It is enough at this point to know that though he himself had a number of slaves at work upon his estate near

Lexington, he sincerely abominated the system of bondage and wished the country in all its parts well rid of the evil. In his speech in behalf of sending a minister to South America on May 10, 1820, Clay said in the House: "Will gentlemen contend, because these people are not like us in all particulars, they are, therefore, unfit for freedom?" In some particulars he ventured to say that the people of South America were in advance of us. On the point which had been so much discussed on the floor during the present session they were greatly in advance of us: "Granada, Venezuela and Buenos Ayres had all emancipated their slaves."

The reference here to the discussions of the "present session" is to the Missouri question, into the settlement of which he was injected in a prominent way. That Mr. Clay was not the emancipationist in this contest is very plain, though his speeches are either not at all or else very incompletely reported. Mr. Schurz hints that there was design in this,¹ but the suggestion seems not quite credible. In any event, much concerning Clay's attitude at this time is left to inference, and this inference clearly is that he played the part of the Southern man. His convictions as to the wrongs of slavery, however sincere, did not obtrude in these debates, and it was certainly because of his Southern affiliations and, as it was believed and stated, his Southern sympathies, that he was enabled to exert his important influence in pacifying the hostile elements, and in putting off the day of reckoning on this great sectional issue. It was the South

¹ Schurz, Vol. I, p. 182.

which always needed to be appeased on this question, though it is probably true that the South at this time was more deeply attached to the Union than the North.¹ It is assumed, therefore, that it was willing to give up more for the sake of the Union than at a later day.

However all this may be, it is plain that a very unhappy crisis in the affairs of the two sections was successfully passed in 1820-21, through the exertions of Henry Clay. That his course does not mark him as an Abolitionist is less important in establishing his reputation as a public man, at the time in which he lived, than would have been his unalterable antagonism to slavery. At any rate, he chose to pacify rather than to disrupt, which would have been the result, since war between the sections could not have come at this time. The sections would have separated in all probability peacefully. It is the purpose of a very large volume which has rather recently appeared² to show that Henry Clay did not originate the Missouri Compromise, as is not infrequently assumed, and *ergo* that it was not a Southern measure. It was, according to this contention, forced upon the Southern people. They were compelled to give open or tacit assent to the principle that the admission of a state might be made contingent upon the denial of the right of a citizen to hold and use slaves, and that the national government might restrict slavery in the territories. If this can be shown, then, it is

¹ Mrs. Archibald Dixon, *The Missouri Compromise and its Repeal*, p. 86.

² *Ibid.*

argued that less opprobrium will attach to the action of those who took part in the repeal of the Compromise in 1854.

It is quite true that Mr. Clay did not originate the measure, which became a battle-cry for North and South during the ensuing forty years. For some time slaveholders had been emigrating with their slaves across the Mississippi River into the country there acquired by the United States through the Louisiana Purchase. In 1818 Missouri had progressed so far in wealth and population that she applied for admission as a state. A bill authorizing her to form a constitution for her government appeared in the House on February 13, 1819, and James Tallmadge, a Republican from New York, moved as an amendment that the further enslaving of negroes should be prohibited in the new state, and that negro children born into slavery should be emancipated upon arriving at the age of twenty-five years. This was the signal for the great contest over the constitutional rights of the slaveholder, and the economic and moral aspects of his institution. Defiant speeches were indulged in, though these seem to have meant much less than at a later day, and secession was spoken of nearly everywhere as though it were an every-day right. The dissolution of the Union was very near at hand, if all that was said augured anything. On February 16, 1819, three days after its introduction, the House passed the Missouri bill with the restriction on the subject of slavery, which, however, was promptly stricken out by the Senate. The measure came back to the House but it failed in the Fifteenth Congress.

The fruit of the session was a bill organizing one portion of the Mississippi country obtained by the Louisiana Purchase into the territory of Arkansas, Clay speaking against the prohibition of slavery there in emphatic terms.¹

When Congress met in December, 1819, three territories applied for admission to the Union as states, Alabama, Maine and Missouri. The plea of the first of these was granted at once. It was slave ground beyond peradventure and no one thought of keeping it out of the Union on this account. It was a balance for Illinois. Missouri, on the other hand, was doubtful, and it was the Southern hope to play it off against Maine, according to the system tacitly agreed to of adding a slave state and a free state to the Union at the same time, in the great work of maintaining the sectional equilibrium.

Many petitions were received, praying for Missouri's admission, both with and without slavery. John W. Taylor of New York, afterward Speaker of the House of Representatives, was the leader of the free-state men in that branch of Congress. Up to this time no such excitement in regard to slavery had been known in this country. On December 30th, Speaker Clay said, on the subject of the admission of Maine, that he was not prepared for the question. He was not opposed to this territory's coming into the union, "but before it was finally acted on he wished to know whether certain doctrines of an alarming character,—which if persevered in, no man could tell where they would end—with respect to a restriction on the admission of

¹ *Annals of Congress*, Vol. II, p. 1223 *et seq.*

states west of the Mississippi were to be sustained on this floor." And he continued: "If beyond the mountains Congress can exert the power of imposing restrictions on new states, can they not also on this side of them? . . . If the states of the West are to be subject to restrictions by Congress, whilst the Atlantic states are free from them, proclaim the distinction at once; announce your privileges and immunities. Let us have a clear and distinct understanding of what we are to expect."¹

Mr. Clay made himself the outspoken advocate of the unconditional treatment of Missouri.² "Equality," he said, "is equity. If we have no right to impose conditions on this state [Maine] we have none to impose them on the state of Missouri. . . . The doctrine is an alarming one, and I protest against it now, and whenever and wherever it may be asserted . . . that any line of distinction is to be drawn between the Eastern and Western states." He asserted that to impose restrictions upon Missouri on the subject of slavery was to strip it "of an essential attribute of sovereignty."³

In January, Mr. Taylor moved an amendment to the Missouri bill prohibiting slavery,⁴ and the combat raged day by day for several weeks, newspaper wags of the time denominating it the "Misery [Missouri] Debate." On February 8, 1820, the question had gotten into so confused and angry a position that Mr. Clay rose in Committee of the Whole and for nearly four hours addressed the House against the right and expediency of the pro-

¹ *Annals of Congress* for that year, Vol. I, pp. 831-832.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 834-835. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 842. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 947.

posed restriction upon Missouri, of which no more is said in the official reports of the proceedings.¹ Of this doubtless very notable speech there is no record except in the responses of those who disagreed with Mr. Clay. The remarks of a speaker, as they are paraphrased by an opponent in a parliamentary debate, are an unfair basis for judgment, but it is certain that he did not in this discussion dwell upon the evils of slavery and make a record for himself as an emancipator of the black man.

Meanwhile the respective claims of Missouri and Maine to statehood were being discussed in a similar way in the Senate. As the debates proceeded it became clear that the House with its Northern majorities would not agree to the extension of slavery west of the Mississippi; while the Senate, where the balance of the sections continued so much longer, and where the South found the guaranty of what it was pleased to regard as its equal liberties in the Union, would not agree to admit Missouri under any restriction upon the rights of the slaveholder, meanwhile excluding Maine altogether. It was at length proposed by Senator Thomas of the new state of Illinois, which had come into the Union in 1818, that both Maine and Missouri should be admitted: the one, of course, without slavery; the other with it, under the proviso that in the territory ceded by France to the United States under the name of Louisiana, slavery should not exist anywhere, except in Missouri, north of the line 36° 30" north latitude; *i. e.*, the southern boundary of Missouri. This measure passed the Senate

¹ *Annals*, Vol. I, p. 1170.

by a vote of thirty-four to ten on February 17th.¹ The majority included fourteen Southern votes.

When the Senate's solution of the difficulty reached the House, it was not favorably received by either Southern or Northern members. Clay himself advised that the prohibition of slavery be made a "recommendation for Missouri's free acceptance or rejection."² He learned of a movement for the withdrawal from Congress of the Southern members in a body. One evening John Randolph approached him, saying: "Mr. Speaker, I wish you would leave the chair. I will follow you to Kentucky or anywhere else in the world." "That is a very serious proposition which we have not now time to discuss," Clay answered. "But if you will come into the Speaker's room to-morrow morning before the House assembles, we will discuss it together." Clay himself expressed a fear that the Union, if not at once, in a few years would be split into three confederacies, an eastern, a southern and a western.³

The congressional reports indicate that the Speaker was one of the most active in the debate, yet his remarks are never recorded. At length, on March 2d, after many votes had been taken, and a conference of representatives of the two chambers had been held, the House agreed to the provision in regard to the line 36' 30" north latitude by a vote of ninety to eighty-seven. This result was attained only by some manipulation, in which we can well believe that Clay had an important part. **Eighteen**

¹ *Annals of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 428.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 1556.

³ Schurz, Vol. I, p. 197.

of these ninety votes came from Northern states whose legislatures or citizens had solemnly protested against the admission of Missouri with slavery, and John Randolph immediately gave them the immortal name of "dough-faces." On March 2d, on the main question of concurrence, the vote was 134 to 42. The Maine bill was now slipped through, to be signed by the President at once. The next day, March 3d, Randolph moved a reconsideration of the Missouri question. Speaker Clay declared the motion out of order, and he was sustained in this opinion when the maker of the motion appealed to the House. The plea was that the regular morning business must be disposed of. When Randolph found his opportunity, he renewed his activity only to find that while the petitions were being presented, the Speaker had signed the bill and had sent it off to the Senate by the clerk. As it was no longer in the possession of the House, a bill to reconsider it could not be entertained, a course of action whereby Randolph was greatly enraged. John Quincy Adams, angry like Randolph, though in an opposite interest, called it "trickery and an outrage upon the rules of the House."¹ Thus the struggle over Missouri, for the time being at least, was at an end, though neither side enjoyed the terms which had been obtained, and a difference which promised to develop into a great national crisis was—happily or unhappily as our view may be—bequeathed to the future.

The Compromise was no sooner announced than there was a close scanning of the records of the con-

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. V, p. 4.

gressmen. How had they voted on this great question? Many went home to very angry constituencies and the excitement during the summer of 1820 was intense. The Missourians, as if to defy the fates which had so narrowly favored them, now proceeded to adopt a course indicating incredibly little tact. They proceeded to insert in their new constitution provisions prohibiting their legislature from ever, at any time, putting a restraint upon slaveholders, and barring from the state free negroes who might desire to enter it to make it their home. Black men were to be slaves eternally in Missouri, a most unpleasant subject of reflection for those Northern people who abominated the Compromise even in its best form. Clay having suffered heavy financial misfortune, through his endorsements for a friend, felt himself compelled to withdraw for a time from public life, to devote himself to better paid pursuits in Lexington. He had been Speaker of the House ever since he had entered it in 1811, except for the absence abroad while negotiating the Treaty of Ghent. He announced now, when the Sixteenth Congress convened for its second session, that he could not be present until after the new year had begun and he begged therefore that his colleagues would elect another presiding officer. The choice fell upon Mr. Taylor, the anti-slavery leader of New York, and the struggle over Missouri, which had broken out afresh as soon as Congress met, was at its height when Clay found it convenient to return to Washington. Indeed, the news of the situation crossing the mountains hastened his coming, and there was need at once for all the pacificatory in-

fluences of which his position and nature gave him command.

The Missouri bill was entitled, "An act to authorize the people of the Missouri Territory to form a constitution and state government, and for the admission of such state into the Union on an equal footing with the original states, and to prohibit slavery in certain territories." It was a mere "enabling act" which called for further proceedings on the part of Congress. It was now the business of that body to scrutinize the frame of government adopted by the new state before finally approving of its admission to the Union, and this work the members undertook with much advice from their constituents.

The argument covered a wide field. It was urged in defense of the provision which barred free negroes from residence in Missouri that other states maintained restrictions against them. In Vermont and New Hampshire they might not bear arms. In Rhode Island if a negro were caught out-of-doors at night after nine o'clock he was to be publicly whipped by a constable. "No negro except a subject of the Emperor of Morocco or a citizen of the United States" could remain in Massachusetts longer than two months. Being then told to go he was in ten days entitled to a public whipping. Even white persons who were strangers in a neighborhood could be fined, imprisoned and whipped in New York and some other Northern states, if lingering within its borders, they promised to become public charges.

In the Senate, Mr. Eaton of Tennessee offered an

amendment to the resolution, declaring Missouri a state of the Union "on an equal footing with the original states," in terms as follows: "Provided that nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to give the assent of Congress to any provision in the Constitution of Missouri, if any such there be, which contravenes that clause in the Constitution of the United States which declares that 'the citizens of each state shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of the citizens in the several states.' " " ¹

The resolution with the Eaton proviso finally passed the Senate on December 12, 1820, by a vote of twenty-six to eighteen, and was sent to the House for its concurrence. There the discussion did not await the action of the Senate; it was already far advanced in acrimony. On December 13th a House measure to admit Missouri was rejected by a majority of fourteen, amid intense excitement. The vote was ninety-three to seventy-nine. "The Missouri question is the most portentous that ever threatened the Union," said the aged Thomas Jefferson at "Monticello." "In the gloomiest moments of the Revolutionary War I never had any apprehension equal to that I feel from this source."

On January 16, 1821, the journal of the proceedings of the House announces: "Another member, to wit from Kentucky, Henry Clay, appeared and took his seat." ² His coming had been awaited with more anxiety than these few words would indicate. In and out of Congress it was believed that he would find some method of applying balm to the gaping

¹ *Annals of Congress*, p. 41.

² *Ibid.*, p. 872.

wound. Hopelessness was written on the faces of Southern and Northern men. The House continued its wrangling over the question always with the same general outcome. One statistician computes that it had now voted just seventeen times against the admission of Missouri.¹ On the 24th of January, a resolution of Mr. Eustis of Massachusetts having been rejected, "after a pause, Mr. Clay rose and gave notice that if no other gentleman made a motion on the subject, he should, on the day after to-morrow, move to go into Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, to take into consideration the resolution from the Senate on the subject of Missouri."² This was the beginning of a movement which under Clay's skilful management brought the unhappy *impasse* to an end. He was not ready with the motion until the 29th, whereupon the Eaton resolution to admit Missouri with the *caveat* against the provision in its constitution, if there were any, which conflicted with the Constitution of the United States, was taken up. Clay himself, Randolph and others spoke on the question. Many and various amendments were proposed during the next few days. Absolutely no basis of agreement was discoverable, although Clay used his conciliatory influences in favor of most of the proposals, and exhibited a temper indicating that he himself would be willing to accept almost any plan which promised to bring about a harmonious understanding.

On February 2d, seeing no other open course

¹ Mrs. Dixon, *Missouri Compromise*, p. 103.

² *Annals of Congress*, p. 944.

and "anxious to make a last effort to settle the distracting question,"¹ he moved to refer the resolution of the Senate to a committee of thirteen members, one for each of the original states, of which he was made the chairman. It included such leaders as Eustis of Massachusetts, John Sergeant of Pennsylvania, Lowndes of South Carolina, Cobb of Georgia and Campbell of Ohio. Five members came from Southern, and eight from Northern states. On February 10th the committee reported great diversity of opinion in its own membership, but in order to attain, if possible, an amicable adjustment of the difficulty, it proposed an amendment to the resolution of the Senate. This was of considerable length and instead of the Eaton proviso, contained a stipulation that the state should be admitted "on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatever, upon the fundamental condition that the said state shall never pass any laws, preventing any description of persons from coming to and settling in the said state, who are now, or hereafter may become citizens of any of the states of this Union ; and provided also that the legislature of the said state, by a solemn public act, shall declare the assent of the said state to the said fundamental condition, and shall transmit to the President of the United States, on or before the 4th day of November next, an authentic copy of the said act, upon the receipt whereof, the President, by proclamation, shall announce the fact ; whereupon, and without any further proceeding on the part of Congress, the admission of the said state into the

¹ *Annals of Congress*, p. 1027.

Union shall be considered complete : And provided further, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to take from the said state of Missouri, when admitted into this Union, the exercise of any right or power which can now be constitutionally exercised by any of the original states.”¹

The hope was expressed by the committee (its chairman, if all signs do not fail, voicing its opinion in the report) that its plan would be received in the spirit in which it had been devised. The belief was entertained that “all must ardently unite in wishing an amicable termination of a question which, if it be longer kept open, cannot fail to produce, and possibly to perpetuate, prejudices and animosities among a people to whom the conservation of their moral ties should be even dearer, if possible, than that of their political bond.”²

Amid much confusion, the amendment which Mr. Clay’s committee had proposed was defeated by a small majority, the twenty-fourth time the House had refused admission to Missouri with the slavery provisions in her constitution.³ On February 13th it was determined to reconsider the vote. In a speech upon this motion Mr. Clark of New York pertinently said : “The course pursued by this House on this subject is (to say the least of it) most extraordinary. You will neither dismiss it nor decide on it, but you cling to this firebrand of discord with the utmost pertinacity without intimating what your ultimate object is.” Mr. Clay spoke for an hour, urging and entreating the House

¹ *Annals of Congress*, p. 1080.

² *Ibid.*

³ Mrs. Dixon, *Missouri Compromise*, p. 110.

to pass the resolution, but it declined by a vote of eighty-eight to eighty-two, Randolph and a few radical Southerners coöperating with the Northerners in the hope of defeating the scheme with motives very different from those which actuated the anti-slavery men.

Meanwhile the votes for President and Vice-President were to be counted and a grave dispute arose as to whether or not Missouri, which had chosen electors, should participate in the election. Another special committee was appointed, with Clay as chairman, to confer with a committee of the Senate as to the method to be pursued. Continuing his conciliatory counsel, since, whether Missouri's vote for James Monroe were or were not counted would not affect the result, he advised a hypothetical statement in the sense that if that state's votes were counted A. B. would receive —— votes, if not counted —— votes. This method was finally adopted, although there was almost unheard-of excitement at some points in the proceedings.

A week later, on February 21st, Mr. Clay's colleague, William Brown of Kentucky, offered a resolution providing for the repeal of that feature of the Missouri bill of March 6, 1820, which placed a restriction upon slaveholding in any part of the Louisiana Territory. He supported it in a speech in which he explained that he did not advocate this course because of any conference with his "friend and messmate" Henry Clay, who knew nothing of his design. "My colleague," he was at pains to explain, "who has labored arduously and zealously to settle this question and tranquilize the Union, is

not willing yet to despair ; he indulges the hope that something may still be done." The very possibility of a serious movement of this kind, however, put the matter in a new light before the Northern members. If the South were to go back and propose the repeal of the "Compromise" feature of the law, what might not be expected from that section? Of course, the Brown resolution did not pass, but the question in hand was materially advanced. The next day Clay proposed the appointment of a committee of the House to meet with a committee of the Senate jointly to devise and propose a basis of settlement. This motion was passed by a vote of 101 to 55. A committee of twenty-three members, elected by ballot, one for each of the states though not from each of the states (for New York as well as Pennsylvania had no less than four members) met with seven senators, and the joint committee, through Clay, reported to the House on February 26th the following resolution :

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that Missouri shall be admitted into the Union on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatever, upon the fundamental condition that the 4th clause of the 26th section of the 3d article of the Constitution, submitted on the part of said state to Congress, shall never be construed to authorize the passage of any law, and that no law shall be passed in conformity thereto, by which any citizen of either of the states in this Union shall be excluded from the enjoyment of any of the privileges and immunities to which such citizen is entitled under the Constitution of the

United States: Provided that the legislature of said state by a solemn public act, shall declare the assent of the said state to the said fundamental condition, and shall transmit to the President of the United States, on or before the fourth Monday in November next, an authentic copy of said act; upon the receipt whereof, the President, by proclamation, shall announce the fact; whereupon, and without further proceedings on the part of Congress the admission of the said state into the Union shall be considered as complete.”¹

In the work of securing a favorable vote upon this resolution, Clay neglected no resource both on and off the floors of Congress. On one occasion at an evening sitting after the Speaker, Mr. Taylor, had twice declared motions of Mr. Clay out of order and in violation of the rules for the procedure of the House, the great Kentucky leader rose and pitching his voice even beyond its highest wont exclaimed: “Then I move to suspend all the rules of the House. Away with them! Is it to be endured that we shall be trammelled in our action by mere forms and technicalities at a moment like this, when the peace and perhaps the existence of the Union is at stake?” One of Mr. Clay’s friends then present has said that he carried his point by storm.²

Nor did he fail to use his persuasive powers upon individual members of Congress. Even those who were not his friends could speak of “the winning,

¹ *Annals of Congress*, p. 1228.

² John J. Crittenden’s speech at Louisville on the “Life and Death of Henry Clay,” September 29, 1852; Robert C. Winthrop’s *Memoir*, p. 8.

courtly Mr. Clay.”¹ He reasoned, he appealed to the emotions, he remonstrated and urged—in short, he neglected nothing which promised to help him in gaining the end in view. He predicted that failure to come to some agreement would break up existing party relations and lead to new combinations, with results that none could foretell.

The House passed the resolution of the joint committee by a vote of eighty-six to eighty-two, on the final vote eighty-seven to eighty-one, and two days later, on February 28th, the Senate approved it with twenty-eight yeas and fourteen nays. Thus the first great crisis in the history of the slavery question in this country was met; thus was Henry Clay reinstated in the esteem of many elements which had come to question his good motives by reason of his opposition to the policies of President Monroe. “The greatest result of this conflict of three sessions,” wrote John Quincy Adams, while the enthusiasm of the victory was fresh in his mind though he had so lately complained of the “pregnant evidences” of the Kentucky leader’s “overbearing” attitude,² was “to bring into full display the talents and resources of influence of Mr. Clay.”³

¹Wm. Winston Seaton, *A Biographical Sketch*, p. 159.

²Vol. V, p. 278.

³*Ibid.*, p. 307.

CHAPTER VI

THE ELECTION OF 1824

As though it were his principal title to a reputation, it is iterated and reiterated of Henry Clay that he was a disappointed seeker for the presidency. The average man and woman of this generation will cherish this impression, if they lack all others in regard to him. The long series of misfortunes attending him in the effort to realize this ambition began in 1824. James Monroe's two terms were coming to their end ; the " Virginia dynasty " would pass into history and the new impulses introduced into political life by the War of 1812 in the persons of Clay, Calhoun and, as it seemed, too, of Jackson, who awakened the military enthusiasm of the people and came to be regarded as a fit candidate for the presidency on this account, made the approaching campaign a memorable one.

Mr. Clay was not a member of the Seventeenth Congress. When he returned to Lexington at the end of the short session in March, 1821, it was to continue the work of straightening out his private affairs which he had begun during the previous summer. He was counsel for the Bank of the United States in Ohio and Kentucky at a remunerative salary, and industriously devoted himself to the practice of the law and to the management of his interests at " Ashland." At about this time

Kentucky was undergoing much excitement on the subject of paper money. Unsound views regarding the currency were everywhere prevalent, and Clay, presidential candidate though he was supposed to be, firmly upheld the unpopular side in this controversy. He defended sound financial principles at every opportunity, but was not long to be left at home in a field so limited in usefulness. The Lexington or "Ashland District," returned him to the Congress which met in December, 1823.

During the summer of that year Mr. Clay was very ill, his state of health being ascribed to his close application to business. He repaired to the Olympian Springs in Kentucky, and, because of his failure to improve under the regimen there, seriously contemplated spending the ensuing winter in the South. He was disinclined to absent himself from Congress, however, and set out betimes with a light carriage and a saddle horse on his way to Washington. Driving, riding and walking by turns, he reached the capital, by easy stages, very much benefited by the journey. He was, as a matter of course, with scarcely any opposition, returned to his place in the Speaker's chair, which he had graced for so many years.

Almost his first act upon resuming his seat in the House was in line with his attitude in Kentucky on the money question. His course was an effective rejoinder to any charge affecting his sincerity or courage in public life. He actively opposed a bill to grant a pension to the mother of Commodore Perry. Though every popularity-seeking speaker in Congress was eager to array himself on the side

of the needy old lady, Clay declared quite positively, and not unavailingly, that he could not favor the claim. The hero of Lake Erie had not died of injuries received in the service of his country. The government had already gone quite far enough in making provision for his widow and children, and there must be some limit to the attention bestowed upon military and naval characters at the expense of men who were quite as serviceable to the republic. "Shall we select the families of those who wore epaulettes on their shoulders," he asked pertinently, "whilst we leave to pine in penury the families of those who have spent their lives in civil service?"¹

Clay's principal claim upon the attention of the country as a presidential candidate, aside from his recent conspicuous part in bringing about an accommodation on the Missouri question, was the determination with which he pressed his internal improvement and protective tariff policies. Although still in ill health, he took the most active part in the discussions of the House. President Monroe persisted in his view that it was no proper function of the Federal government under the Constitution to build roads and canals. Clay abated nothing of his faith, and in January, 1824, a bill appeared in the House authorizing the President to direct the making of surveys for a system of interior highways, in order to forward postal, commercial and military communication. The sum of \$30,000 was set aside for this purpose.

Clay entered the debate with all the gay spirit of

¹ *Annals of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 982.

his nature. For some time he had been preparing a statement of his views which he offered to the House on February 14th.¹ A member had said that the Constitution contemplated the exercise of all "municipal" functions by the states. Mr. Clay replied that the navigation of the Mississippi, canals connecting the waters of the Delaware and the Chesapeake and to unite the Ohio and the Potomac, the Cumberland Road, and other enterprises which he mentioned, were matters that no state or states would ever be likely to forward to definite ends. The powers of both governments, national and state, were undoubtedly municipal, often operating upon the same subject. To him, he said, that "to establish post-roads" meant "to fix, to make firm, to build," and he would appeal for support "to any vocabulary whatever of respectable authority."

From this "express grant" he passed to the inferential one in reference to canals, which he traced to the power of Congress to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several states. He railed at members who would support bills appropriating money for docks and lighthouses on the seacoast to help the foreign trade, and would do nothing for domestic trade. He put it to the candor of his opponents "whether the only difference is not that which springs from the nature of the two elements on which the two species of commerce are conducted—the difference between land and water." "The principle," he said, "is the same whether you promote commerce by opening for it an artificial channel where now there is none,

¹ *Annals of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 1022.

or by increasing the ease and safety with which it may be conducted through a natural channel, which the bounty of Providence has bestowed. In the one case your object is to facilitate arrival and departure from the ocean to the land. In the other, it is to accomplish the same object from the land to the ocean."

It was also very clear to Mr. Clay that roads and canals might be built by the nation for military uses. "These," he said with great truth, "are in the nature of fortifications since, if not the depositories of military resources, they enable you to bring into rapid action the military resources of the country, wherever they may be. They are better than any fortifications, because they serve the double purpose of peace and war. They dispense, in a great degree, with fortifications, since they have all the effect of that concentration at which fortifications aim."

As was his wont, he made the cause of the West his own, and voiced the hopes and ambitions of his people, as it was common to call them, and as they truly were in many respects. It would be impossible, he said, "to alienate the affections of the West from this government. . . . You may impoverish them, reduce them to ruin by the mistakes of your policy and you cannot drive them from you." They had received little enough—only the Cumberland Road which stopped at Wheeling, on the "mere margin of a Western state," though he had "toiled," until his powers had been "exhausted and prostrated," to prevail upon Congress to complete this highway, that they might have the means to reach the capital of their country. The govern-

ment was to last, he hoped, "forever"—at any rate "until the wave of population, cultivation and intelligence shall have washed the Rocky Mountains and mingled with the Pacific." Canals and roads were but a part of the "improvements and comforts of social life" which he wished might spread "over the wide surface of this vast continent."

It was in this discussion that another famous passage occurred with John Randolph. In an extremely ill-mannered though able discourse, the Virginian turned his attention to Mr. Clay's definition of the word "establish" as it was used in the Constitution. Words he called "the counters of wise men, the money of fools," and predicted that by the use of them the people would yet be cajoled out of their rights and liberties. There never had been such violation of language by liberal construction "since the days of that unfortunate man of the German coast, whose name was originally Fyerstein, anglicized to Firestone, but got by translation from that to Flint, from Flint to Pierre-a-Fusil and from Pierre-a-Fusil to Peter Gun."¹ No one knew what "a mass of criminality" may not have been incurred because "never till now had our people a preceptor learned enough to instruct them in the meaning of the word 'establish.'"

Mr. Clay rose to reply, evidencing his affront at Randolph's language and manner. He believed that his situation in health, leading to magnanimity in some quarters of the House, would have induced a "generous heart" to desist from efforts to draw him into a "personal altercation." He made no

¹ *Annals of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 1296.

pretensions as a "preceptor." "I know my deficiencies," Mr. Clay continued. "I was born to no proud patrimonial estate ; from my father I inherited only infancy, ignorance and indigence ;" whereupon Randolph leaned over to a friend, and remarked that the Speaker should have continued the alliteration and added "insolence."¹ "I feel my defects," Clay continued, "but so far as my situation in early life is concerned, I may, without presumption, say, they are more my misfortune than my fault." Thus did the relations between these two men grow more unfriendly, leading at length to an encounter which Clay in his calmer years regarded with much disfavor and self-reproach.

The bill authorizing the Federal surveys that this "Western Hotspur," as some of his foes delighted to call him, so ably advocated, passed the House by a vote of ninety to seventy-five, and being approved by the Senate, was signed by the President on some inconsistent excuse. Fruitless though it was, it marked an impressive advance in the development of our constitutional doctrine.

The tariff of 1816, in the adoption of which he had had the aid of Calhoun and the South, was soon adjudged by Clay and the protectionists of the Central and Western states to be too low. A little usually calls rather loudly for more protection, and the measure which was enacted in 1816 was really a mild fillip to domestic industries in comparison with many of the later American tariffs. An artificial prosperity had followed the war, and times were still far from what they should have been

¹Wm. Winston Seaton, p. 152.

in the view of many interests. In 1818 the duty on iron was increased, and in 1820 Clay, in a long and impressive speech in the House, advocated a general revision of the law.¹ Though it passed that branch of Congress largely through his influence, it failed in the Senate by a single vote, and it was still before the country in 1824 upon his return to active parliamentary life.

It was in this debate that Clay christened his policy the "American system," a name which it continued to bear to its very great advantage for many years. His important speech on this subject was made in the House of Representatives on March 30th and 31st; he spoke for four and one-half hours on the 30th and concluded on the following day. "The object of the bill under consideration," he said at one point, "is to create this home market and to lay the foundations of a genuine American policy." "Is there no remedy within the reach of the government?" he said again, after depicting the country's ills. "Are we doomed to behold our industry languish and decay yet more and more? But there is a remedy and that remedy consists in modifying our foreign policy, and in adopting a genuine American system."

It was true, as was remarked the following day by Webster, who sympathized with the New Englanders who were still free-traders, in defense, as they believed, of their shipping trade, that the "American system" was misnamed, but this did not at all matter. "Since Mr. Speaker denominates the policy which he recommends 'a new policy in

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 218.

this country,' ” said Webster, with some reason ; “since he speaks of the present measure as a new era in our legislation ; since he professes to invite us to depart from our accustomed course, to instruct ourselves by the wisdom of others, and to adopt the policy of the most distinguished foreign states,—one is a little anxious to know with what propriety of speech this imitation of other nations is denominated an ‘American policy,’ while on the contrary a preference for our own established system, as it now actually exists and always has existed, is called a ‘foreign policy.’ This favorite American policy is what America has never tried ; and this odious foreign policy is what, as we are told, foreign states have never pursued.”

That Mr. Clay’s argument at all points did not betray complete mastery of the principles of political economy need occasion no very great surprise. He was not a profound student of that subject. He expressed himself as under some obligations to Mathew Carey, who was industriously propagating protectionist theories in Philadelphia. He had a mass of information in hand bearing upon the industrial condition of the country, most of which was entirely reliable, and arraying all this in order, and ornamenting it for oratorical use, it became very effective in a legislative chamber. It is easy to find the flaws in his line of reasoning, and some are much too obvious ; but in general it reflected credit upon his learning, and greatly increased his reputation for sincerity of heart. In the main an argumentative discourse, flowers of speech were not entirely eschewed, as when he said :

“The difference between a nation with and without the arts may be conceived by the difference between a keel-boat and a steamboat combating the rapid torrent of the Mississippi. How slow does the former ascend, hugging the sinuosities of the shore, pushed on by her hardy and exposed crew, now throwing themselves in vigorous concert on their oars and then seizing the pendant boughs of overhanging trees : she seems hardly to move ; and her scanty cargo is scarcely worth the transportation ! With what ease is she not passed by the steamboat, laden with the riches of all quarters of the world, with a crew of gay, cheerful and protected passengers, now dashing into the midst of the current, or gliding through the eddies near the shore !”

He closed with a statement of the difficulties which beset the advocates of the bill. They were, he said : “First, the splendid talents which are arrayed in this House against us. Second, we are opposed by the rich and powerful in the land. Third, the executive government, if any, affords us but a cold and equivocal support. Fourth, the importing and navigating interests, I verily believe from misconception, are adverse to us. Fifth, the British factors and the British influence are inimical to our success. Sixth, long-established habits and prejudices oppose us. Seventh, the reviewers and literary speculators, foreign and domestic. And lastly, the leading presses of the country, including the influence of that which is established in this city and sustained by the public purse.

“From some of these, or other causes, the bill

may be postponed, thwarted, defeated. But the cause is the cause of the country, and it must, and will prevail. It is founded in the interests and affections of the people. It is as native as the granite deeply embosomed in our mountains. And, in conclusion, I would pray God, in His infinite mercy, to avert from our country the evils which are impending over it and by enlightening our councils to conduct us into that path which leads to riches, to greatness, to glory."

This speech is regarded by Mr. Schurz as "the most elaborate and effective" Clay ever made.¹ No ideas which are not very familiar to those who have followed the course of protectionist speech and writing in this country in a century, under the inspiration of the two Careys, were developed by the Kentuckian; but it is probable that no one up to that time at least had ever presented them so fully and forcibly. The bill passed the House by a majority of three and the Senate by the same small majority. Its enactment was effected mainly by the votes of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. Calhoun and the South were now rapidly changing their position in reference to this subject,² and New England had not yet joined the Middle states in support of the policy of which, in later years, it became the unflinching champion.

Thus did Clay stand as a public man when at the end of Monroe's second term a successor was to be chosen to the presidency. There were in the field, principally, John Quincy Adams, in line for the

¹ Vol. I, p. 214.

² Hunt, *Calhoun*, p. 61 *et seq.*

succession by reason of his service as Secretary of State and his large public experience ; Jackson, now a senator from Tennessee, the military candidate ; Clay, Calhoun, Monroe's Secretary of War ; and Secretary of the Treasury, William H. Crawford, the skilful Georgia politician whose name is now all but gone out of the popular mind.

In the contest which was in prospect Clay was not to be so prominent a factor as he and his friends hoped and perhaps anticipated. He did not conceal his desire to become the successor of Mr. Monroe. His claims were actively supported by Thomas H. Benton, a cousin of Mrs. Clay, now lately come to the Senate from the new state of Missouri. The candidate had devoted lieutenants in many states, the personal attachment to him in quarters wherein he was at all admired being of a remarkable kind. It was at a day when aspirants for the presidency were not nominated in party conventions, and in this "era of good feeling" all were nominally members of the same party. The congressional caucus, as a means of agreeing upon a candidate, had fallen into disfavor, and the issue was largely in the hands of state conventions and legislatures.

As early as in 1822, Clay was nominated for the presidency by the Kentucky legislature, and other states had also expressed their preference for him. In the region in which his strongest support might have been expected, however, the West and South, Jackson made large inroads. The "hero of New Orleans" suddenly became the stuff out of which it was thought by the masses of the people that a great lawgiver might be made. He gained the

electoral votes of a number of states, and indeed led the poll with ninety-nine against eighty-four for Adams, forty-one for Crawford and thirty-seven for Clay. As no one had a majority, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, which now by constitutional provision, was required to choose from among the three leading candidates. This was a task of some difficulty in the existing state of popular feeling and the result might very likely have been the election of Clay, the favorite Speaker of the House, if he had been on the eligible list. As it was, with the electoral votes of Kentucky, Ohio and Missouri, and four votes from New York, he was considered to control the situation, and was courted by all the aspirants in the hope that he would forward their respective ambitions. Some have thought that he did not very gracefully accept his own defeat ; but he had lost nothing as a national figure and his prominence, indeed, was enhanced by his situation.

In the midst of the excitement, it was his pleasant duty as Speaker of the House to welcome Lafayette, whose coming to America, in 1824, everywhere awakened the dearest national memories.¹ The Kentuckian had long been in correspondence with the old patriot, who was completely captivated by the young statesman's warm heart, somewhat French as it probably was, with all its graces and quick impulses. Mr. Clay's address on this occasion was

¹ Indeed, it was suggested that Lafayette should be elected Vice-President and Clay wrote his friend, Senator J. S. Johnston, on September 3, 1824—"Such a disposition of the office would be highly creditable to the national gratitude, if it could be made without any constitutional impediment."

most happy. He spoke of "the very high satisfaction which your presence affords in this early theatre of your glory and renown." In one respect he would find the Americans unaltered—"in the sentiment of continued devotion to liberty, and of ardent affection, and profound gratitude to your departed friend, the father of his country, and to you and your illustrious associates in the field and in the cabinet for the multiplied blessings which surround us." This sentiment, he continued, "now fondly cherished by more than ten millions of people, will be transmitted with unabated vigor down the tide of time through the countless millions who are destined to inhabit this continent, to the latest posterity."

This interregnum, during which all factions forgot their differences, was only brief. Even Jackson thought it well to try to win the favor of Clay, though the latter's course in condemning the general's conduct in Florida during the Seminole War still rankled. No one seems to have known just where the Kentucky leader would be found when the task of choosing from among Jackson, Adams and Crawford really faced him. Crawford could not have tempted a man like Clay, nor did he exert any fascination upon the country at large. He had lately suffered partial paralysis, so that he was not able to append his name to the documents in the Treasury Department. Clay wrote from "Ashland" to his friend, J. S. Johnston, on October 2, 1824, that he had just heard from a man who had seen Crawford. "He says that his gait, articulation, and general appearance indicated most clearly the

paralysis under which he has labored ; and that he appeared to be much more infirm than Mr. Jefferson at the age of eighty-two, whom he also saw.”¹ The real choice lay between Jackson and Adams. It is rather difficult now to see how there was room to expect any but one result. With General Jackson Clay could have nothing in common, so far as good judges of human nature are able to discern. Their courses up to this time indicate no meeting-ground, and as their characters were unfolded later, sincerely and naturally enough, in spite of exaggeration here and there for personal antagonism, no congeniality of view presented itself. Clay could not give his support to a “military chieftain merely because he has won a great victory.” He could not believe that “killing 2,500 Englishmen at New Orleans” qualified for “the various difficult and complicated duties of the chief magistracy.”²

It is true that Adams and Clay had come into conflict at Ghent. They were men of essential differences. If Adams’s diary does not magnify, they had had a bitter dispute about the disposition of the papers affecting the negotiations, though it was a puerile quarrel, and should not have left open wounds. Adams here and there in his journal had expressed unfavorable opinions of Clay, but few, who were subjects for allusion at all, escaped his criticisms. Anyhow, they were just passing views confided to a diary which is always a trusted friend. Once in 1820, however, Adams had said of Clay, alluding to his habit of playing cards for money,

¹ Letter in Collections of Pennsylvania Historical Society.

² To F. P. Blair, Jan. 29, 1825, *Private Correspondence*, p. 112.

which report, among his political enemies, was persistently attributed to him : “ In politics as in private life Clay is essentially a gamester, and with a vigorous intellect, an ardent spirit, a handsome elocution, though with a mind very defective in elementary knowledge and a very undigested system of ethics, he has all the qualities which belong to that class of human characters.”¹ The next year Adams, again stung by some attack, said : “ Clay is an eloquent man with very popular manners and great political management. He is, like almost all the eminent men of this country, only half-educated. His school has been the world and in that he is a proficient. His morals, public and private, are loose but he has all the virtues indispensable to a popular man. . . . Clay’s temper is impetuous and his ambition impatient. . . . As President of the Union his administration would be a perpetual succession of intrigue and management with the legislature. It would also be sectional in its spirit, and sacrifice all other interests to those of the Western country and the slaveholders.”²

These were harsh opinions from a man who was now to be President or not to be President, by the favor of him concerning whom they were uttered ; but that they had been cherished or recorded no one knew until the diary was published, twenty-five years after Clay’s death. It is not likely, anyhow, that the revelation of them would have influenced the action of a heart so magnanimous.

The Jackson men made much of the fact that their candidate had received a plurality of votes. They

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. V, p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326.

pretended to believe that this imposed an obligation upon the House, which, however, refused to be bound by it, for Clay and his men very soon made it clear that they would support John Quincy Adams. This knowledge aroused all the ire in Jackson's nature, and his forces, many of whom were always recruited from the rough and lawless elements of the population, turned upon Clay savagely. He was treated to anonymous letters, threatening him with personal injury, and efforts of many kinds were made to move him from his determination.

"No man but myself," he said later, in reviewing the trials of this experience, "could know the nature, extent and variety of means which were employed to awe and influence me." "The knaves cannot comprehend how a man can be honest," he wrote to Francis P. Blair. "They cannot conceive that I should have solemnly interrogated my conscience, and asked it to tell me seriously what I ought to do."¹ "They all have yet to learn my character," he said in a letter to his friend Brooke, "if they suppose it possible to make me swerve from my duty by any species of intimidation or denunciation."

None of these devices availed. "I shall view without emotion," he further wrote Brooke, "these effusions of malice and remain unshaken in my purpose. What is a public man worth if he will not expose himself, on fit occasions, for the good of the country?"

The most dastardly trick of all was the publication of a letter, on January 28th, less than a fortnight

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 112.

before the election in the House, in the *Columbian Observer*, an inconspicuous newspaper issued in Philadelphia. The correspondent wrote from Washington. He took his pen in hand to tell the editor of "one of the most disgraceful transactions that ever covered with infamy the Republican ranks." He had heard of a "bargain" which was as bad as "the famous Burr conspiracy of 1801." Adams had offered Clay the post of Secretary of State after Jackson had refused the overtures of Clay to the same end. Such doings would mean the "end of liberty." No name was signed to the communication, but it was said to have come from a member of Congress.

Clay was probably too hasty in leaping at such an assailant, but on February 1, 1825, he issued a card in the *National Intelligencer*, the most essential portion of which was his statement that, if the letter were not a forgery, he would "pronounce the member, whoever he may be, a base and infamous calumniator, a dastard and a liar." "If he dare unveil himself and avow his name," Mr. Clay continued, "I will hold him responsible, as I here admit myself to be, to all the laws which govern and regulate men of honor." He soon repented of the last words of his statement, especially when he learned the identity of the writer of the letter. He said afterward that he did not wish to seem to be the patron of the duel, "a pernicious practice which no man could hold in deeper abhorrence." "Condemned as it must be," he added, "by the judgment and philosophy, to say nothing of the religion of every thinking man, it is an affair of

feeling about which we cannot, although we should reason. Its true corrective will be found when all shall unite, as we all ought to unite, in its unqualified proscription." The writer of the letter when he came out of hiding, which he did in a day or two in "another card" in the *National Intelligencer*, proved to be George Kremer, a Pennsylvania congressman, a well-known partisan of Jackson. He was a quite ridiculous figure in Washington, as at home. He was mainly famous for his leopard skin overcoat, and eccentric behavior generally, so that Mr. Clay, as none knew better than he, had shot at too small a mark.

Nevertheless, Clay asked for the appointment of a committee in the House to investigate the charge. It was elected by ballot. Kremer, who had been so bold, now refused to give any authority for his allegations, and there was no report except a statement to this effect which was made on February 9th, the very day that the House assembled to elect a President of the United States. Adams was chosen, receiving the votes of thirteen states, while Jackson was supported by only seven and Crawford by four delegations. Clay was appointed Secretary of State, and although Jackson and fourteen other senators voted against the confirmation of the name, the result was accomplished without them.

With Adams and Clay both in their offices, the "terms of the bargain" wore the appearance of having been carried out. In the minds of many people, Clay's acceptance of the position strengthened the impression of the existence of an understanding between him and Adams, or, at any rate,

between their respective friends. In vain did Clay say that he had no alternative but to choose Adams as President ; he could not conscientiously favor Jackson. In vain did Adams explain that he desired to avail himself of Clay's great experience as a public man, which had been the sole motive in appointing him to be the head of the State Department. In vain was the retort that James Buchanan and others had proffered Clay a place as Secretary of State in Jackson's cabinet, if he would but support the hero of New Orleans. In vain did both men now and hereafter resent the imputations of their enemies.

Kremer had been a mere instrument and dupe. Jackson himself returned to Tennessee raging about "bargain and corruption" and the "great conspiracy," while his friends took up the cry and circulated it until there was no backwoods settlement which was not able to talk fluently of the event for the next twenty years, unsupported as it was by one scintilla of evidence.¹ As late as in 1844, when Jackson reiterated the charge, it again deprived Clay of votes which he needed, and might have had at the election of that year. Even if there had been such a bargain, there was no necessary inference of corruption, yet this incident was the stalking horse of politics throughout the whole Jacksonian epoch in our national history. The oftener the story was repeated, the more it was denied. Colton in his *Life of Clay* devoted four chapters of his work to the "corrupt bargain,"

¹ Schurz, Vol. I, p. 246 *et seq.* ; Sumner, *Jackson*, p. 90 *et seq.*

and the bugaboo grew greater each time the subject was discussed.

On March 3d, Clay retired from the House of Representatives, and from his place as its Speaker, which he had held almost continuously since the day he entered the chamber. A resolution was passed, thanking him for "the able, impartial and dignified manner" in which he had presided over the deliberations of the body, and Mr. Clay in response made a graceful speech in the course of which he said:

"Near fourteen years, with but comparatively short intervals, the arduous duties of the chair have been assigned to me. . . . Of the numerous decisions which I have been called upon to pronounce from this place on questions often suddenly started, and of much difficulty, it has so happened from the generous support given me, that not one of them has ever been reversed by the House. I advert to this fact, not in a vain spirit of exultation, but as furnishing a powerful motive for undissembled gratitude. In retiring, perhaps forever, from a situation with which so large a portion of my life has been associated, I shall continually revert, during the remainder of it, with increasing respect and gratitude to this great theatre of our public action. . . . In returning to your respective families and constituents, I beg all of you, without exception, to carry with you my fervent prayers for the continuation of your lives, your health and your happiness."

To John Quincy Adams he was "the unrivaled Speaker,"¹ while Robert C. Winthrop of Massachu-

¹ New Jersey Letter, 1827.

setts declared : “ Mr. Clay was six times elected Speaker of the House, and held that lofty position longer than any one in the history of our country before or since. No abler or more commanding officer ever sat in a Speaker’s chair on either side of the Atlantic. Prompt, dignified, resolute, fearless, he had a combination of intellectual and physical qualities which made him a natural ruler over men. There was a magnetism in his voice and manner which attracted the willing attention, acquiescence and even obedience of those over whom he presided.”

No painstaking student of parliamentary law, he relied usually upon his own instinctive sense of what was proper and practicable in the emergency at hand. Once, many years afterward, he said to Mr. Winthrop, while the latter occupied the chair :

“ I have attentively observed your course as Speaker, and I have heartily approved it. But let me give you one hint from the experience of the oldest survivor of your predecessors. Decide—decide promptly—and never give your reasons for the decision. The House will sustain your decisions, but there will always be men to cavil and quarrel about your reasons.”¹

This brilliant epoch in his life had now come to an end. Mr. Clay is to be viewed in a new field—as Secretary of State.

¹ Winthrop, *Memoir of Clay*, p. 6.

CHAPTER VII

SECRETARY OF STATE

It is quite likely that no four years in Clay's life were so unhappy as those which he spent at the head of the Department of State. Though he wished the office, probably only as a stepping-stone to the presidency, which he believed it to be, he must have realized after the experience that he was preëminently intended by nature for other public fields. His place was as a parliamentary leader. He was the Prince Rupert of debate. There was meagre, if any, satisfaction in store for him in the places where governmental tasks are quietly performed, and he chafed until he became quite ill under the restraints of his position. He knew himself well when he wrote to Francis Brooke on February 18, 1825, while discussing the expediency of accepting the office: "I have an unaffected repugnance to any executive employment."

The years during which he was Secretary of State yielded few notable results to the nation and were marked by personal bitterness, rancor and discord. They were filled with the echoes of the presidential contest of 1824, and the noise which preceded the greater battle to be waged in 1828. There were few opportunities for Clay to speak, or to do any of those things which gave him most joy and which enabled him to shine brightly as a public character.

He loved the din of action. He needed appreciation and praise. He was, beyond most men, raised up by success and cast down by defeat. He was likely to be over-joyous or over-despondent, and his moods made him a man whom many of his contemporaries, as well as his later judges, did not always understand.

The experience served at least to make a friend of John Quincy Adams, whose colder, more severe views of life had sometimes led to misunderstanding. In a speech at Lexington on July 12, 1827, Clay said of Adams:—"I have found him at the head of the government, able, enlightened, patient of investigation and ever ready to receive with respect and when approved by his judgment to act upon the counsels of his official advisers. . . . From the commencement of the government, with the exception of Mr. Jefferson's administration, no chief magistrate has found the members of his cabinet so united on all public measures, and so cordial and friendly in all their intercourse, private and official, as these are of the present President."

To Crawford he wrote, in the next year: "I had fears of Mr. Adams's temper and disposition, but I must say that they have not been realized and I have found in him, since I have been associated with him in the executive government, as little to censure and condemn as I could have expected in any man."¹ On the other hand, Mr. Adams, by closer acquaintance, was brought greatly to admire his Secretary of State. His diary for this period contains many friendly references,—and none that

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 194.

are unfriendly—to Mr. Clay. Their relations were at every point harmonious, else record would have been made of it by the diarist. It has been so often said of Clay that he was an unseemly seeker after the presidency that his devotion to his chief in these years needs to be noted. He thought and spoke of no other candidate for the succession except Adams himself. No disloyalty like that which Chase, another man whose ambitions are often under review, exhibited toward Lincoln, characterized Clay. He served with deference. He consulted when differences of opinion arose and acceded gracefully.

The President and his Secretary of State were fellow sufferers in such a storm of calumny as had not been experienced by any public man since John Adams was helped out of office through this agency by the Jeffersonians. The son was now living through a like period, and would suffer in the same way at the hands of the Jackson men, a still ruder type of Democrats, recruited from the growing back-settlements of the West, and fed upon new ideas of equality which had never yet gained a practical ascendancy in the management of the government. Hitherto the people, though they were “equal,” were willing by common consent to place their superiors in public office. They felt an honest pride in doing this. Now for the first time skill and experience in statecraft, and learning of all kinds, were to be cast to the four winds, and the government was to be directed on an entirely different plan.

Adams's view of Clay was sincerely expressed

shortly after he left the presidency. He said in reference to the "corrupt bargain" story on March 11, 1829, in reply to a letter from a committee in New Jersey: "Upon him [Clay] the foulest slanders have been showered. . . . The Department of State itself was a station, which, by its bestowal, could confer neither profit nor honor upon him, but upon which he has shed unfading honor by the manner in which he has discharged its duties. Prejudice and passion have charged him with obtaining that office by bargain and corruption. Before you, my fellow citizens, in the presence of our country and of Heaven, I pronounce that charge totally unfounded. . . . As to my motives for tendering to him the Department of State when I did, let that man who questions them come forward. Let him look around among statesmen and legislators of this nation, and of that day. Let him then select and name the man, whom, by his preëminent talents, by his splendid services, by his ardent patriotism, by his all-embracing public spirit, by his fervid eloquence in behalf of the rights and liberties of mankind, by his long experience in the affairs of the Union, foreign and domestic, a President of the United States, intent only upon the honor and welfare of his country, ought to have preferred to Henry Clay."¹

These four years in the history of the State Department were not productive of any important public measure. One there would have been if it had succeeded, the first Pan-American Congress. The subject of our relations with the Spanish-American

¹ Prentice, Appendix, pp. 300-301.

countries was one which, now as before, strongly appealed to Clay's ardently sympathetic nature and to his lively imagination. The experience here, as in other affairs, at close range with all the facilities for being apprised of the facts and with the responsibility of acting upon them, which a speaker in a legislative chamber seldom or never feels, was quieting and educational in its influence. The southern republics themselves had originated the plan for the congress which was to be held on the Isthmus of Panama at the junction point of the hemispheres. The scheme had been in mind for several years and the hope, of course, was the formation of a kind of cis-Atlantic Pan-American League to oppose its front against any possible European aggression now or in time to come. It was an undertaking of large dimensions and it sorely needed the favor of the United States.

No more fortunate time could have been selected than during Clay's administration of the State Department, but after all the plans were laid, circumstances arose wholly to prevent success. President Adams, who at first disapproved, was induced to favor the enterprise and he submitted to Congress a proposal for sending commissioners to the meeting. As a matter of course, the administration's arrangements were opposed. The slaveholding element, since the Missouri discussion, was being consolidated. Adams, in his message, expressed such hopes for the nation under the Constitution as had not been heard since Hamilton's day. He favored not only extensive internal improvements, but also a national university and establishments to promote

“the cultivation of the mechanic and of the elegant arts, the advancement of literature, the progress of the sciences, ornamental and profound.” This was a monstrous theory at a time when the country had just emerged from twenty-four years of strict construction at the hands of the Virginians. It was now becoming convenient for Calhoun and his followers in the South to interpret the Constitution in the most niggard way in reference to the national powers. In state rights they conceived that they would find their stronghold against the North, which they were shrewd enough to see was bearing them down to an inevitable fate.¹

Though the Panama Congress could not of itself be held to be unconstitutional, it was the project of a man who cherished and sought to impose upon the country very unconstitutional theories. Moreover, the slaveholders feared association with states which had emancipated their negroes and which very likely might send black men to the conference as delegates. At length, however, opinion in Congress was appeased in some degree, since the undertaking promised to be very popular in the country at large; the ministers were confirmed by the Senate, and the money was appropriated to bear the expenses of the mission. These envoys were John Sergeant of Pennsylvania and Richard C. Anderson of Kentucky. Clay had hoped to secure the services of Albert Gallatin, who, however, declined. The delegates started away in the summer of 1826, Anderson dying on the journey, whereupon Joel R. Poinsett, our Minister in Mexico, was asked to take

¹ Hunt, *Calhoun*.

his place in the congress. When Sergeant arrived upon the ground, the Spanish-Americans who, then as now, were like mercury, had adjourned to reassemble in Mexico, but, involving themselves again in some of their inevitable revolutions, the second meeting was never held. The mission came to naught, except as a lesson to Mr. Clay, to put his faith not again in his earlier absolute way in the people of Latin America, though they should live in "republics" under "presidents."

It was during the discussion in relation to the Panama mission that Mr. Clay was moved to great anger by a foul speech which fell from the lips of John Randolph. This man was growing more and more abusive and irresponsible in his utterances. In the summer of 1828 President Adams wrote of him that he was "the image and superscription of a great man stamped upon base metal." His mind was "a jumble of sense, wit and absurdity."¹ It was in one of his "drunken speeches" in the Senate, to which chamber he had been advanced late in 1825 to fill a vacancy, that he made his famous allusion to Adams and Clay as "the coalition of Blifil and Black George."

Throughout it was probably the most blackguardly speech ever heard in either branch of Congress, but the confusion of the sentences, and the mental condition of the man who uttered them should have kept Mr. Clay, as it did Mr. Adams, from taking particular note of it. However, since the Panama mission was Mr. Clay's particular measure, and he had been stung before by Randolph's tongue, it

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. VIII, p. 64.

seemed impossible for him to sit quietly under the outrageous attack. Randolph maundered along, frequently introducing Greek and Latin phrases, and making many allusions to the figures in ancient history, holy and profane, in the history of Russia, Shakespeare, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, and nearly everything else which time had crowded into his mind. He indulged in remarks that drove the ladies from the galleries and was vainly urged by Hayne and other senators to take his seat. This he would not do until he believed himself done. He poured his ridicule upon a President who had been elected to be President of the United States, but was now busily engaged in trying to make himself "the President of the human race." "Who made him his brother's keeper?" Randolph inquired. "Who gave him—the President of the United States—the custody of the liberties, or the rights, or the interests of South America, or any other America, save only the United States of America, or any other country under the sun?" They used to race horses, play cards and play billiards, but these things were forbidden, and the *tedium vitæ* now found expression in Sunday-schools, missionary societies, colonization societies—"taking care of the Sandwich Islands, free negroes, and God knows who." He had seen pious people in Virginia. Though the little negroes about them were so ragged as to be obliged to hide for shame, the women of the family were "employed in making pantaloons and jackets for the free negroes of Liberia."

Randolph dwelt with great brutality upon the subject of the "corrupt bargain." "An alliance,

offensive and defensive, had been got up between old Massachusetts and Kentucky ; between the frost of January and young, blithe, buxom and blooming May—the eldest daughter of Virginia,—young Kentucky—not so young, however, as to make a prudent match and sell her charms for her full value.” He began his allusion to Blifil and Black George by asking, “On what occasion was it that Junius said, after Lord Chatham had said it before him, that it reminded him of the union between Blifil and Black George?” He would not say which was Blifil and which was Black George. When he drew pictures, he did not write under them, “This is a man” or “This is a horse.” Continuing his observations, he came to a vote upon some resolutions which had gone against him. “I was defeated, horse, foot and dragoons,” he declared, “cut up and clean broke down by the coalition of Blifil and Black George—by the combination unheard of till then of the Puritan with the blackleg.”

“Having disposed of this subject,” continued Randolph, “I shall say one word more and sit down,” but his promise was not fulfilled and he spun his mad skein of words for another hour.¹

When the report of this speech reached Clay’s ears, he challenged Randolph, in the old Southern fashion, though but for Benton’s extended report of the affair it would not have proven itself much better entitled to serious place in the annals of dueling than Clay’s earlier experience upon the “field of

¹ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 1825–1826, Vol. II, Part I, p. 389 *et seq* ; also *Garland’s Life of John Randolph*, Vol. II, p. 249 *et seq*.

honor." He had lately expressed his very great distaste for this method of settling private disputes, after he had reflected, as will be remembered, upon his outburst of rage following the publication of George Kremer's letter in a newspaper in Philadelphia. He sincerely hated it and was really himself very inexperienced in the use of weapons, so that he must have fared badly in any serious encounter. His ardent temperament, however, seemed to compel him to resent gross imputations upon his honor in this way, and he now issued another challenge which Randolph accepted promptly. From beginning to end the duel was a drama full of comical punctilio, though it might easily have ended fatally, for the principals were much in earnest.

Randolph's speech was delivered on the 30th of March. On April 1st, according to Benton, General Jesup, Clay's second, found the eccentric old Virginian and the arrangements were made for a meeting. The time fixed was at half-past four o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, April 8th, on the Virginia bank of the Potomac, above the Little Falls Bridge. The combatants were to use pistols at the distance of ten paces. Benton, according to the "code," was barred from serving as a second, because he was a blood relation of Mrs. Clay, but he was "at liberty to attend as a mutual friend." The men stood up and gravely observed all the customs of duelists, the fire of each at the first passage having missed the object for which it was designed. Randolph's bullet struck the stump behind Mr. Clay, and Clay's "knocked up the earth and gravel behind Mr. Randolph."

The mutual friend, Benton, now interposed, but both men demanded another shot. Clay again missed his mark, merely piercing the skirt of a white flannel wrapper which Randolph had curiously worn for the occasion. "The unseemly garment," says Mallory,¹ "constituted such a vast circumference that the locality of the thin and swarthy senator was at least a matter of very vague conjecture." Randolph himself fired his second shot into the air in some chivalrous spirit which took possession of his eccentric moods, saying, "I do not fire at you, Mr. Clay."² He advanced toward his antagonist, offering his hand and remarking, as he pointed to the bullet-hole, that Clay owed him a coat. The Secretary of State said in his happiest way, "I am glad the debt is no greater." Thus ended, what was for Benton, at least, as he wrote in later life, "the last high-toned duel" that he had seen. It was indeed "among the highest-toned" that he had ever witnessed.³

A number of treaties and conventions with foreign powers were negotiated during Clay's incumbency of the secretaryship. These related largely

¹ Vol. I, p. 147.

² The night before the duel Randolph sent for his friend General James Hamilton of South Carolina, who said of that interview: "I found him calm, but in a singularly kind and confiding mood. He told me that he had something on his mind to tell me. He then remarked, 'Hamilton, I have determined to receive without returning Clay's fire; nothing shall induce me to harm a hair of his head. I will not make his wife a widow, or his children orphans. Their tears would be shed over his grave, but when the sod of Virginia rests on my bosom there is not in this wide world one individual to pay this tribute upon mine.'"

³ Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, Vol. I, p. 70.

to commerce and navigation. There was little opportunity for a brilliant foreign policy which it is certain that Clay would have directed had the occasion presented itself. The passages with other governments, in which he had a hand, do not relate to subjects in our history which need to be remembered, and the four years added little to his fame as a public man, as they unfortunately contributed nothing to his own peace and enjoyment. He was "abused and assailed without example," as he said in a speech in Cincinnati on August 23, 1828. He had presumed to speak of Jackson as a "military chieftain," which was the excuse for a personal statement by "Old Hickory," and the fury of the combat increased, with "bargain and corruption" always in the foreground. No denial would avail. "The charge like every lie," as Mr. Colton remarks,¹ "would travel over the continent while truth was putting its boots on."²

¹ Vol. V, p. 341.

² Now already Clay and his friends were collecting testimony to rebut the story of the "bargain," a movement for campaign purposes which in subsequent years reached much greater proportions. On the 14th of December, 1827, he wrote from Washington to the wife of his friend, Benjamin Gratz, in Lexington, at whose home in 1824 he had made statements concerning his relation to the respective claims of Adams and Jackson. He said :

"I received this morning your obliging letter of the 3d instant on the subject of that which I had addressed to Mr. Gratz. I have a distinct recollection of the occasion, at your house, on which the conversation stated by you took place; and I am perfectly sure that your narrative of it is entirely accurate. I know not how to express, with sufficient warmth and gratitude, my very great obligations for your kindness in writing the letter and your generous permission to use it in my defense. Although I feel sensible that it would be of much benefit to me, and I should feel proud and honored by the exhibition of the

Mr. Clay's health, while he was Secretary of State, was at times so miserable that his life was despaired of. The nature of his malady was rather mysterious, but it was made much worse by the campaign of calumny he was compelled to pass through and led several times to his thinking very seriously of resignation. The issue was several times under discussion with the President. On February 18, 1828, Mr. Adams writes in his diary: "Mr. Clay was here complaining of the state of his health, which he says is so bad that nothing, except the existing state of things, could induce him to continue longer in the public service. He thinks his health is gradually sinking and his spirits are obviously giving way under the load of obloquy, scandal and persecution which has been heaped upon him as well as upon me."¹

In April he again told the President that he must

name of a fair witness, among the other respectable persons who have testified to the same point, I cannot allow myself to use the privilege which you have given so kindly. I cannot consent to place your name in the public prints. Some rude and uncourteous editor or scribbler might say something to wound your feelings or my own on account of you.

"I shall write to Mr. Blair [Francis P. Blair who was present on the occasion] and procure his statement which may supersede the necessity of a public use of yours, which I shall nevertheless file carefully away and preserve among my most cherished documents. . . . I have nothing new to communicate to you from this place. Of politics everybody is heartily tired, tho' we learn that the ladies in Lexington are arrayed under opposite standards, and take a lively interest in behalf of their respective favorites. I hope that the unusually large number of your sex who have come here this winter with the members of Congress, their husbands and relatives, will contribute to calm the angry and excited passions, and to smooth and soften our ways. . . ."

¹*Memoirs*, Vol. VII, p. 439.

resign.¹ “A relaxation from public duties was indispensable and he must go home and die or get better. His disorder,” Adams continued, “is a general decay of the vital powers, a paralytic torpidity and numbness, which began at the lower extremity of his left limb, and from the foot has gradually risen up the leg and now approaches the hip.” One day Judge Southard called upon the President and said that Clay could scarcely be expected to live a month longer. Mr. Adams heard every suggestion of resignation with real pain and regret, being not at all disposed to go on with his administration without his Secretary of State. A doctor told the President that the trouble was nervous, not paralytic, and Clay continued to attend to his many duties with regularity, though he went to Philadelphia for a time to consult with and live under the care of some of the eminent physicians in that city. He told Adams, however, that “he had little hope of surviving, and had so made up his mind as to set little value upon life.”²

His domestic afflictions bore heavily upon his spirit and its buoyancy might have been expected almost to desert him for reasons quite apart from his physical condition. In the space of a year or two he lost by death two of his daughters, including the beloved Mrs. Duralde of New Orleans. Indeed, but one now remained. A son was insane and another had misconducted himself so grievously as to cause his parents much pain.³ For several weeks

¹*Memoirs*, Vol. VII, p. 517.

²*Ibid.*, p. 521; also Mrs. Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, pp. 256-257, 276.

³Mrs. Smith, p. 303.

he was wholly unable to sleep except by the use of anodynes,¹ yet at "drawing rooms" he still kept on "the mask of smiles"² with a bravery which greatly increased the admiration of his friends. Mrs. Smith wrote on February 16, 1829 :

"I never liked Mr. Clay so well as I do this winter ; the coldness and *hauteur* of his manner have vanished, and a softness and tenderness and sadness characterize him (to me at least), for I know not how it is in general society—that is extremely attaching and affecting—at the same time perfect good humor ; no bitterness mingles its gall in the cup of disappointment."³

Mrs. Clay also was ill, and, while sharing her husband's domestic sorrows, at "the last drawing-room" of the Adams administration, "she received all with smiling politeness." Mr. Clay too concealed his feelings. He "looked gay and was so courteous and gracious and agreeable that every one remarked it." He was determined, he said, that "we should regret him" when he had gone. "My heart filled to overflowing," Mrs. Smith continues, "as I watched this acting, and to conceal tears which I could not repress, took a seat in a corner by the fire, behind a solid mass of people." There Mr. Clay sought her out and she spoke of her sadness on losing her friend, Mrs. Clay. "For a moment he held my hand, pressed in his, without speaking, his eyes filled with tears and with an effort he said : ' We must not think of this or talk of such things now,' and relinquishing my hand

¹ Mrs. Smith, pp. 277, 303.

² *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

drew out his handkerchief, turned away his head and wiped his eyes, then pushed into the crowd and talked and smiled as if his heart was light and easy. Alas, I knew, what perhaps no other among these hundreds knew, that anguish, heartrending anguish, was concealed beneath that smiling, cheerful countenance, and that the animation and spirits which charmed an admiring circle were wholly artificial.”¹

Mr. Clay was not abandoned by his friends, but they seemed fewer. They were being overwhelmed in numbers by the Jacksonians who descended upon everything like the flies and locusts of Egypt, and with about as much benevolent purpose in the view of Adams, Clay and those who shared their opinions. There were dinners tendered to the Secretary of State by his admirers, as he went back and forth between Washington and Kentucky; on such occasions, he was nearly always called upon to rebut aspersion and calumny directed against himself and the administration. At a public dinner in Frazer's Tavern at Lewisburg, Va., on August 30, 1826, Mr. Clay responded to the toast :

“Our distinguished guest, Henry Clay—the statesman, orator, patriot and philanthropist; his splendid talents shed lustre on his native state, his eloquence is an ornament to his country.”

He again roundly defended himself and Mr. Adams. “A spirit of denunciation is abroad,” said he. “With some condemnation, right or wrong, is the order of the day. No matter what prudence and wisdom may stamp the measures of

¹ Mrs. Smith, p. 278.

the administration ; no matter how much the prosperity of the country may be advanced, or what public evils may be averted, under its guidance, there are persons who would make general, indiscriminate and interminable opposition.”¹

Even in Kentucky, where they had earlier been so faithful to their “Great Hal,” influences were at work which swept the state for Jackson in 1828. Amos Kendall was leading a movement on the subject of the “bargain,” holding, as Adams called it, “a self-constituted court of inquisition” in the legislature. In Lexington on July 12, 1827, Clay responded to the toast :

“Our distinguished guest, Henry Clay : the furnace of persecution may be heated seven times hotter and seventy times more he will come out unscathed by the fire of malignity, brighter to all and dearer to his friends ; while his enemies shall sink with the dross of their own vile materials.”

This toast drew forth a spirited and fervid speech. Jackson himself had now come out into the open, and had made himself the sponsor for the accusation. It demanded and received at Clay’s hands complete denial, as it did again on August 23, 1828, at Cincinnati, through which city he passed on his way to Washington.

The temptation to reply to Jackson in kind must have been great, but Mr. Clay maintained his dignity of utterance, and charged the general with nothing more than inexperience in civil pursuits and unfitness for the office which he strove to obtain. At Lexington, Mr. Clay said : “At this

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 325.

early period of the republic, keeping steadily in view the dangers which had overturned every other free state, I believed it to be essential to the lasting preservation of our liberties, that a man devoid of civil talents, and offering no recommendation but one founded on military service, should not be selected to administer the government. I believe so yet; and I shall consider the days of the commonwealth numbered when an opposite principle is established. . . . I have, as your representative, freely examined, and, in my deliberate judgment, justly condemned the conduct of General Jackson in some of our Indian wars. I believed, and yet believe him, to have trampled upon the Constitution of his country, and to have violated the principles of humanity. Entertaining these opinions, I did not and could not vote for him.”¹

In Baltimore, on May 13, 1828, Mr. Clay made a speech upon the danger of a military spirit in a republic. In this address Jackson's name was not mentioned, but he called the Republican party away from its false gods, and appealed to it to return to its view “that liberty and the predominance of the military principle were utterly incompatible.” “If indeed we have incurred the Divine displeasure and it be necessary to chastise this people with the rod of vengeance, I would humbly prostrate myself before Him and implore His mercy to visit our favored land with war, with pestilence, with famine, with every scourge other than military rule, or a blind and heedless enthusiasm for mere military renown.”

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 355.

These estimates of Jackson, although Clay was the leading victim of his unjust spleen, were mild in comparison with those which were expressed by others concerning the "chieftain"; for example, by Thomas Jefferson and President Adams. In 1824, the old seer of "Monticello" said to Daniel Webster: "I feel much alarmed at the prospect of seeing General Jackson President. He is one of the most unfit men I know of for such a place. He has had very little respect for laws or constitutions, though an able military chief. His passions are terrible. When I was President of the Senate he was a senator [during 1797 in Philadelphia, when Jefferson was Vice-President of the United States, and Jackson was for a short time a senator from the new state of Tennessee] and he could never speak on account of the rashness of his feelings. I have seen him attempt it repeatedly, and as often choke with rage. His passions are no doubt cooler now, for he has been much tried since I knew him. But he is a dangerous man." ¹

Adams wrote of Jackson in his diary in December, 1827: "He is incompetent both by his ignorance and by the fury of his passions. He will be surrounded and governed by incompetent men whose ascendancy over him will be secured by their servility, and who will bring to the government nothing but their talent for intrigue." Adams predicted that they would soon "go to wreck and ruin," when there would come "the recoil of public opinion in favor of Mr. Clay." "If human nature has not changed its character," he continued,

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 300.

“Kentucky and the Union will then do justice to him and to his slanderers.”¹

In spite of these, as they would seem, insuperable objections to Jackson as President, his strength increased, and in the election of 1828 he was overwhelmingly the choice of the people. The “old hero” of New Orleans had been done out of his honors and dues in 1824, and he must have them now. He received 178 electoral votes against only 83 for Adams, whose total was principally made up from the New England states, New York, New Jersey and Delaware. Not a single vote came to him from states south of the Potomac or west of the Alleghanies. It was a protest in the popular belief against an “extravagant, corrupt, aristocratic, Federalist administration,”² as Jefferson’s election had been a protest against the same things, as they were represented by the elder Adams. At Jackson’s inauguration in March, 1829, the ex-President must slink back to his home in much the same way as his father, the “Duke of Braintree.” He was a monarchist, his sympathies were English and there was no place for him in the affections of a democratic people.

As the Adams administration drew to a close, and Jackson and his friend Eaton, with the notorious Peggy O’Neill, and others connected with the new government, came in to usurp the places which had been so acceptably and gracefully held in Washington society by the representatives of old American families, it seemed to the people resident there little short of final catastrophe. They were looked upon

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. VII, p. 383.

² Sumner, *Jackson*, p. 118.

as Goths and Vandals come down upon Rome. Farewells were said, homes broken up, friendly ties severed, perhaps forever. There was but ill-suppressed comment upon Mrs. Jackson and the pipe which she was believed to smoke ; upon the gay tavern-keeper's daughter who as a cabinet lady was to be a candidate for a place at dinner-tables, and upon other socially *outré* prospects. The general gloom is depicted in Mrs. Smith's interesting letters.

Mrs. Clay, no less than Mr. Clay, was among the most beloved of Washington social figures, and the packing of their furniture and contemplated going was to their friends a most unhappy leave-taking. "What a change, what a change will there be in the city," exclaimed Mrs. Smith. "On no former occasion has there been anything like it." ¹ "Every one of the public men who will retire from office on the 4th of March will return to private life," she thought, "with blasted hopes, injured health, impaired or ruined fortunes, embittered tempers and probably a total inability to enjoy the remnant of their lives." Never did she witness "such a gloomy time in Washington." "Every individual connected with the government from the highest to the lowest clerk" was filled with apprehension, and well might he be, for Jackson was to introduce the "spoils system," entirely new to our politics. Men were to be "proscribed" for their political views. "There is not at Cairo to Constantinople," said Clay, "a greater moral despotism than is at this moment exercised in this city over public opinion. Why a man dare not avow what he thinks or feels,

¹ *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, p. 258.

or shake hands with a personal friend, if he happens to differ from the powers that be.”¹

“The sun of my political life,” said John Quincy Adams, “sets in the deepest gloom.” Three days before the inauguration of his successor he was in somewhat better cheer. He went into retirement, he said, “with a combination of parties and of public men against my character and reputation, such as I believe never before was exhibited against any man since the Union existed”; but, he continued, “passion and ignorance, envy and jealousy will pass. The cause of the Union and of improvement will remain, and I have duties to it and to my country yet to discharge.”²

The incoming did not call upon the outgoing President, it was said because of his fear of meeting the great Kentucky leader, while in the act of performing this courtesy. On March 12th, Clay, who had arranged to leave Washington a little before the President, said his farewells to the Adamses in a house to which they had removed. The next day he started for Lexington by way of Baltimore, seeing on the journey north from his carriage in Pennsylvania Avenue the ex-President, when “a last salutation” was exchanged. Mr. Adams remained, as he said, “a silent observer of passing events,” and delayed his departure until June when it was effected, as was that of all the members of his administration, without expressions of official regret. Clay accepted the result with as much resignation as possible. “The military principle has

¹ Mrs. Smith, *First Forty Years*, p. 30.

² *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 102.

triumphed," he said, in a letter to Niles of the *Register*,¹ "and triumphed in the person of one devoid of all the graces, elegances, and magnanimity of the accomplished men of the profession."

Clay, after Jackson's election, had been offered a place on the Supreme Bench by President Adams, but the appointment was declined.² His friends in Washington banded together to give him a dinner on March 7th. In his speech on this occasion he abated nothing of his faith in regard to General Jackson. He bowed to the will of the people. "I may, nevertheless, be allowed to retain and express my own unchanged sentiments," he added, "even if they should not be in perfect coincidence with theirs. . . . I deprecated the election of the present President of the United States because I believed he had neither the temper, the experience, nor the attainments requisite to discharge the complicated and arduous duties of Chief Magistrate. I deprecated it still more, because his elevation, I believed, would be the result exclusively of admiration and gratitude for military service, without regard to indispensable civil qualifications. I can neither retract, nor modify any opinion which on these subjects I have at any time heretofore expressed. . . . It is remarkable that at this epoch, at the head of eight of the nine independent governments established in both Americas, military officers have been placed, or have placed themselves. . . . The thunders from the surrounding forts, and the acclamations of the assembled multitude on the 4th

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 213.

² *Memoirs*, Vol. VIII, p. 78.

told us what general was at the head of our affairs. It is true, and in this respect we are happier than some of the American states, that his election has not been brought about by military violence. The forms of the Constitution have yet remained inviolate." Clay was not without hope which he would express sincerely, but he said, "I make no pledges, no promises, no threats, and I must add I have no confidence."

At the conclusion of his speech he requested permission to propose a toast :

"Let us never despair of the American Republic."

The return home was accomplished only slowly. It was in the nature of a "triumphal journey."¹ Clay wrote to his friend, J. S. Johnston, from Wheeling, on April 1st : "My journey has been marked by every token of warm attachment and cordial demonstrations. I never experienced more testimonies of respect and confidence, nor more enthusiasm. Dinners, suppers, balls, etc. I have had literally a free passage. Taverns, stages, toll-gates, have been thrown open to me free from all charge. Monarchs might be proud of the reception with which I have everywhere been honored."²

In Lexington three thousand sat down at Fowler's Garden, at a great barbecue, given in his honor, in true Kentucky fashion, on May 16, 1829. Long tables were spread under the trees and huge roasts of beef and saddles of mutton were served with the accompanying punch. The meat was cooked over coals in deep trenches, and the carving was done by

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 229.

² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

young men who were very proud of their skill. This dinner was an opportunity for Mr. Clay to speak of the condition of the roads, always upon his mind. So deep was the mire, that it had taken nearly four days in April for him and his family to travel sixty-four miles over one of the most used highways in Kentucky.

His coming was awaited with suggestions that he should be reëlected to Congress from his old district, or that he should be given a seat in the state legislature. He said that he wished repose, both on account of his enfeebled health, and the condition of his private affairs : " Upon my return home," he continued, " I found my house out of repair, my farm not in order, the fences down, the stock poor, the crop not set and late in April the corn-stalks of the year's growth yet standing in the field." He desired "retirement, unqualified retirement from all public employment" ; and this he was now for a little while to enjoy.

CHAPTER VIII

NULLIFICATION AND COMPROMISE

IF Henry Clay sincerely believed that he would enjoy the quiet life of his neglected farm for any great length of time after his experiences in larger fields, or that the people would permit him to end his career in retirement, he erred seriously. For a while he occupied himself busily, however, with affairs at "Ashland." The planting-season was at hand for corn, hemp and other crops profitable in the blue grass region of Kentucky. He purchased in Washington County, Pa., fifty full-blooded Merino ewes, selected from one of the finest flocks in the country. They were driven to "Ashland" and put out to pasture. Other species of blooded stock were added to those already on the farm and with the help of Mrs. Clay, always intelligently devoted to the dairy and allied interests, he soon brought into order the estate which had suffered so much during his long absences. He also took some legal cases and defended at considerable trouble to himself a young man named Wickliffe, accused of murder, whereby he increased his popularity in Kentucky, among classes of the people who had exchanged his leadership for that of General Jackson. Indeed, Mr. Clay soon came to believe that the antagonism displayed in the election of 1828 was directed against Mr. Adams rather than himself.¹

¹To Francis Brooke, *Private Correspondence*, p. 242.

This impression seemed to be confirmed by a tour through the state, which was "full of gratification." He wrote his friend, J. S. Johnston: "Every sort of enthusiastic demonstration of friendship and attachment on the part of the people was made toward me. Barbecues, dinners, balls, etc., etc., without number." He thought that "the men and the women, too, would devour" him. He was obliged "to speak often and long." At Russellville at least 3,000 persons assembled, and an audience not smaller in size heard him at Hopkinsville. His addresses, he said, were "never better received by all parties, nor were they ever more satisfactory" to Mr. Clay himself. At that moment he entertained "not a particle of doubt of there being . . . a decided majority for me against all and every person whatever."¹

Clay was now very clearly the leader of a new political party. It had been in process of formation for many years. He and his followers were called "war-hawks" during the War of 1812, then Young Republicans and now, arraying themselves against Jackson, they were to be National Republicans, or Whigs. They were not willing to grant that the Jackson men who took the name Democratic were the legitimate heirs to the Jeffersonians, but on the constitutional question this becomes the verdict of history. One abiding hate, above all others, now filled Jackson's implacable mind, and it had for its particular object Henry Clay. Men were chosen for the cabinet, not for their statesman-like abilities, but because they could talk glibly of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

the "corrupt bargain."¹ Postmasters and collectors were dismissed from office and replaced by Jackson men, because they had once been, and now still dared to be friends of Clay. He called it "proscription" and "moral despotism." It was nothing at all but that mischievous and offensive system which from this time on became firmly entrenched in our politics as the "spoils system."

To Jackson it was not so much a recognition of any vulgar principle as a natural outgrowth of a distinctly military temperament. In war it was his policy to quell all opposition by whatever means. He carried this idea into politics and now, as hereafter, to the end of his public career, it was his policy to meet every one who obstructed his pathway as though he were a public enemy—often, indeed, as though he were an outlaw, beyond the pale of the accepted rules of war.

Jackson had taken care that the Secretary of State should be set out of his office upon the exact stroke of the clock, which announced the end of the Adams administration. Before his departure from Washington, Clay had denounced the policy of dismissing faithful old government servants for political reasons, and he always condemned in unmeasured terms the administration of Jackson for this practice, so unheard of in American public life up to that time. In the excellent speech at the dinner tendered him by his friends in Lexington, on May 16, 1829, he continued his criticisms of the President by reason of this course. He declared it to be monarchical. "The great difference between the two forms of

¹Schurz, Vol. I, p. 337.

government [the monarchy and the republic],” said he, “is that in a republic all power and authority, and all public offices and honors emanate from the people, and are exercised and held for their benefit. In a monarchy, all power and authority, all offices and honors proceed from the monarch. His interests, his caprices and his passions influence and control the destinies of the kingdom. In a republic the people are everything, and a particular individual nothing. In a monarchy, the monarch is everything, and the people nothing.”

It had been objected to the late administration, by Jackson himself, that it had adopted and enforced a system of proscription, yet “during the whole period of it,” said Clay, “not a solitary officer of the government from Maine to Louisiana within my knowledge was dismissed on account of his political opinions.” The six Presidents preceding Jackson, the first six in the republic’s history, had in their forty years made only seventy-four removals, and practically all these removals were for good and sufficient cause. The “old hero” had already very far exceeded this total, for reasons that were wholly personal and partisan, and the entire civil service was in a state of disorganization, uncertainty and fear, knowing that more dismissals were in near prospect. In the first year of Jackson’s administration the number of changes exceeded 2,000.¹

The President’s “tremendous power of dismissal,” Clay continued at Lexington, was intended “to be exercised for the public good and not to

¹Schurz, Vol. I, p. 334.

gratify any private passions or purposes." He preferred to remain silent when he did not approve the acts and measures of the administration, but he could not do so. "Hitherto," said he, "the uniform practice of the government has been, where charges are preferred against public officers, foreign or domestic, to transmit to them a copy of the charges for the purpose of refutation or explanation. This has been considered an equitable substitute to the more tedious and formal trials before judicial tribunals. But now persons are dismissed not only without trial of any sort, but without charge. And as if the intention were to defy public opinion, and to give to the acts of power a higher degree of enormity, in some instances, the persons dismissed have carried with them in their pockets the strongest testimonials to their ability and integrity, furnished by the very instruments employed to execute the purposes of oppression. . . . To be dismissed without fault and without trial; to be expelled, with their families without the means of support and, in some instances, disqualified by age, or by official habits from the pursuit of any other business, and all this to be done upon the will of one man, in a free government is surely intolerable oppression. . . . According to the principles now avowed and practiced, all offices, vacant and filled, within the compass of the executive power, are to be allotted among the partisans of the successful candidate. . . . The consequence of these principles would be to convert the nation into one perpetual theatre for political gladiators. There would be one universal scramble for the public offices. . . . Congress

corrupted and the press corrupted, general corruption would ensue, until the substance of free government having disappeared, some pretorian band would arise, and with the general concurrence of a distracted people put an end to useless forms.”¹

Clay felt very strongly upon this subject, and expressed himself with an earnest eloquence worthy of exerting greater influence upon the people, whom the “military chieftain,” however, seemed to have in his complete control, no matter how grave his offense against constitutional traditions. The opposition leader in his retreat at “Ashland” was in constant communication by correspondence with his friends, and he had the opportunity to continue his arraignment of Jackson’s assaults upon the civil service while out on his speaking tours.

After he had returned from his triumphal journey through the state, he projected a trip down the Mississippi. He left “Ashland” in the middle of January, going directly to New Orleans to visit the bereaved home of his daughter, Mrs. Duralde, who, it will be remembered, died while he was Secretary of State. He remained for a few weeks, making excursions, hither and thither, to adjoining plantations. His reception was cordial. When he unexpectedly attended the legislature, Speaker and all, without distinction of party, rose to receive him. He was invited to public dinners at Memphis, Vicksburg, Port Gibson, Natchez and Baton Rouge, but he declined all tendered entertainments except that at Natchez, which place he took on his way home in March. Upon leaving New Orleans for

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 375 *et seq.*

Mississippi, an immense concourse of people assembled to witness his departure. The banks of the levee, and the tops of steamboats and houses were completely covered by the cheering multitude. Cannon were fired, and banners and handkerchiefs were waved to bid him adieu. At Natchez a crowd pressed into the boat, almost weighing it down. At the dinner and ball with which he was honored, both parties "vied with each other in their testimonies of respect." He was at home again before the first of April, certain of his early reinstatement in the public affections. "I have almost daily proofs of the general conviction which prevails of my having been wronged," he wrote from "Ashland" on April 17, 1830,¹ "and I have full confidence that my fellow citizens will ultimately render me perfect justice. . . . Everywhere I was received with warmth and cordiality and in some instances with enthusiasm. When the passions, lately so strongly excited, shall subside, and the people come to reflect on the past, and to reason upon the promises made by or for the successful presidential candidate, and the shameful violation of all of them at Washington, they cannot fail to come to right conclusions."

In spite of all this he wrote a little later to his friend, Judge Brooke, that he felt himself "more and more weaned from public affairs. My attachment to rural life," he continued, "every day acquires more strength, and if it continues to increase another year, as it has the last, I shall be fully prepared to renounce forever the strifes of public life.

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 259.

My farm is in fine order, and my preparations for the crop of the present year are in advance of all my neighbors. I shall make a better farmer than statesman. And I find in the business of cultivation, gardening, grazing and the rearing of the various descriptions of domestic animals the most agreeable resources.”¹

Though great pressure was exerted to induce him to visit the North in the summer of 1830, he thought that he would be able “to resist it.” Indeed, he was “urgently solicited to go to almost every quarter of the Union.” If he were to yield to these entreaties he would be “perpetually traveling.”² He did, however, heed a summons to Ohio, speaking in Cincinnati and other cities to vast assemblages of people on the questions of the hour. He could not have any but an interest, close and continuous, in the course of public events, and the approach of another presidential election gave him and his friends the deepest concern.

The issue which was now very prominently to engage attention was the tariff. Of this Henry Clay was everywhere known to be the especial champion. He was one of the authors and principal advocates of the laws of 1816 and 1824. He had coined the phrase, the “American system,” as applied to the protective policy. He was not unmindful of the course of affairs in reference to the Tariff of 1828, passed while he was Secretary of State, and he was first and foremost in his denunciation of the spirit of nullification and disunion with which South Carolina greeted this measure. The South had

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 261.

² *Ibid.*, p. 271.

aided in enacting the tariff law of 1816, Calhoun himself standing shoulder to shoulder with Clay in order to secure its success. When it was a question of raising the duties in 1824, there had been no violent opposition from the South, though the legislature of South Carolina had passed a joint resolution, declaring it an unconstitutional exercise of Federal power. Under the latter measure many new manufactories were established, and wherever these secured a foothold, they spread the love of protection, until, in 1828, we find Webster and the New Englanders, who four years before had most vehemently opposed the policy, its warm advocates. The woolen manufacturers seemed to lead in the demand for a further increase of duties, in order to make it still more inconvenient for the British weavers to sell their fabrics in America. Already in 1826 there was a loud cry for a raising of the wall. Business was said to be in a state of depression from which nothing could rescue it but governmental aid. Congress would have passed a bill in 1827, except for the casting vote in the Senate of Vice-President Calhoun, who had now come to the conclusion that protection was not only inexpedient but also unconstitutional. It was certain that the bill would be revived in the following year.

The South began to raise its voice in a threatening way. The "Woolens Bill," as it was called, was adjudged to be an insult to the American people.¹ Remonstrances were framed and adopted in public meetings and sent to Congress, but the wool-growers and woolen manufacturers of the North

¹ McMaster, Vol. V, p. 243 *et seq.*

were not to be turned aside. They too held meetings and the issue was joined between two geographical sections of the Union of radically different economic interests.¹

Jackson earlier had been regarded as a protectionist. Some of his declarations seemed to mark him as the advocate of at least a moderate tariff. He now wavered a little, but he took no very active part in forwarding the interests of either party. The discussion rapidly gained in bitterness. Petitions and memorials, remonstrances and protests poured into Congress, but in January, 1828, the committee was ready with the bill, though it seems to have been generally thought that it would not pass. Indeed, there was a secret understanding to this end, but the agreement was broken and the bill became a law. Its provisions pleased no one. They were purposely made odious and it was at once dubbed "the tariff of abominations," or "black tariff."² The rumblings in South Carolina now became an ominous roar. The nullification sentiment there, with some support from neighboring states, assumed a definite form, and definite expression of it reached the nation through Calhoun in his famous "Exposition of 1828."³

Clay had entered the discussion in the speech delivered at Cincinnati, on August 23, 1828, on his way back to Washington, after a few weeks' visit to "Ashland." He defended the new tariff law as "but the consequences of the policy" earlier begun in reference to the establishment of the "American

¹ See Hunt, *Calhoun*.

² McMaster, Vol. V, p. 255.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 255 *et seq.*; Hunt, *Calhoun*, p. 71 *et seq.*

system." The sole object now was "the improvement and perfection of the great work." It was to Calhoun that he directly alluded when he said : "It is not the least remarkable of the circumstances of these strange times that some who assisted in the commencement, who laid corner-stones of the edifice, are now ready to pull down and demolish it."

As to the policy of South Carolina, he said : "It amounts to this : that whenever any portion of the community finds itself in a minority in reference to any important act of the government, and by high coloring and pictures of imaginary distress can persuade itself that the measure is oppressive, that minority may appeal to arms, and, if it can, dissolve the Union. Such a principle would reverse the established maxim of representative government, according to which the will of the majority must prevail. If it were possible that the minority could govern and control, the Union may indeed as well be dissolved ; for it would not then be worth preserving. The conduct of an individual could not be more unwise and suicidal who, because of some trifling disease affecting his person, should, in a feverish and fretful moment, resolve to terminate his existence."

But he did not believe that there was reason to apprehend "the execution of these empty threats. The good sense, the patriotism, and the high character of the people of South Carolina are sure guarantees for repressing without aid any disorders, should any be attempted within her limits. The spirit of Marion and Pickens and Sumter, of the

Rutledges, the Pinckneys and of Lowndes yet survives and animates the high-minded Carolinians. The Taylors and the Williamises, and their compatriots of the present day will be able to render a just account of all, if there be any who shall dare to raise their parricidal hands against the peace, the Constitution and the Union of the states. Rebuked by public opinion—a sufficient corrective—and condemned by their own sober reflections, the treasonable purpose will be relinquished, if it were ever seriously contemplated by any.”¹

These were the ringing words of a man who never cherished a sentiment which was unfaithful to the Union, and he would need to repeat them many times before he should reach the end of his public career. He had adverted to the subject in his speeches in the South. At Natchez, on March 13, 1830, he aimed to reconcile the people of Mississippi and the South to the protective system, and to calm the fears of those who saw in prospect a dissolution of the Union. Rumors of the separation of the states, he said, had gone abroad ever since the establishment of the government. The West, the North and East, the South, were, in turn, charged with designs of this character. It was his belief that such apprehension arose from “our fears rather than from any substantial reasons to justify them.”²

In Cincinnati again on August 3, 1830, he alluded to the attitude of South Carolina, and, at greater length than ever before, discussed the doctrines of nullification. The speech followed the Webster-

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 360 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390.

Hayne debates by a few months and was Clay's contribution to that controversy. He could hope to add nothing to what Webster had said. The doctrine had been "examined and refuted with an ability and eloquence which had never been surpassed on the floor of Congress." So far from being oppressed, he asserted that South Carolina had always had "a larger proportion of power and influence at home and abroad than any state in the whole Union in comparison with the population." She had the presiding officer of the Senate who might, in a contingency, become President. She had a citizen on the Supreme Bench, and "until within a few months she had nearly one-third of all the missions of the first grade from this to foreign countries." He charged the South Carolina "politicians" with not looking "beyond the simple act of nullification," with not seeing that one of the inevitable consequences of their course would be "to light up a civil war." He called the claim of right on the part of a state to nullify a Federal law an "enormous pretension." "Under the South Carolina doctrine, if established, the consequence would be a dissolution of the Union, immediate, inevitable, irresistible. There would be twenty-four chances to one against its continued existence."

"Those who are opposed to the supremacy of the Constitution, laws and treaties of the United States," he said, "are adverse to all union, whatever contrary professions they may make. For it may be truly affirmed that no confederacy of states can exist without a power, somewhere residing in the

government of that confederacy, to determine the extent of the authority granted by it to the confederating states." There was no middle ground between nullification and secession for Mr. Clay, although he hinted at the expediency of suffering any state, so bold as to try her rash experiment, to go her way in peace. He said :

"If the unhappy case should ever occur of a state being really desirous to separate itself from the Union, it would present two questions. The first would be whether it had a right to withdraw without the common consent of the members ; and supposing, as I believe, no such right to exist, whether it would be expedient to yield consent. Although there may be power to prevent a secession, it might be deemed politic to allow it. It might be considered expedient to permit the refractory state to take the portion of goods that falleth to her, to suffer her to gather her all together, and to go off with her living. But if a state should be willing and allowed thus to depart, and to renounce her future portion of the inheritance of this great, glorious and prosperous republic, she would speedily return, and in language of repentance say to the other members of this Union, 'Brethren, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.' Whether they would kill the fatted calf, and chiding any complaining member of the family say, 'This, thy sister, was dead and is alive again ; and was lost and is found,' I sincerely pray the historian may never have occasion to record."

It was not conceivable that a man to whom every person and every circumstance pointed as the anti-

Jackson leader, and also the anti-Calhoun leader, the father of the famous "American system," which was bringing upon the country critical sectional disaffection, should be permitted to remain longer upon a farm in Kentucky. Clearly in 1832 he would be the candidate for the presidency of those elements in the electorate who could not endorse Andrew Jackson, and he himself believed that the number was growing larger daily. The attention bestowed upon him wherever he went attested to his great popularity. He swayed the enormous audiences which gathered to hear him with his magnificent oratory. The people seemed to bend responsive to his will, and he may be excused, if under such evidences he somewhat erred in judging the temper of the country, and, as it would appear, proofs of the strength of his hold upon their affections. The judgment was right as to a really important percentage of the people; he erred only in thinking that they were numerous enough to outweigh the Jackson hosts in a popular election.

At Cincinnati in the summer of 1830 he said : "I am now a private man, the humblest of the humble, possessed of no office, no power, no patronage, no subsidized press, no post-office department to distribute its effusions, no army, no navy, no official corps to chant my praises and to drink in flowing bowls my health and prosperity. I have nothing but the warm affections of a portion of the people, and a fair reputation, the only inheritance derived from my father, and almost the only inheritance which I am desirous of transmitting to my children."

In the winter of 1830-1831 Mr. Clay made another visit to New Orleans, and upon his return was occupied with the settlement of several estates of which he was the executor. The summer of 1831 was signalized by a contest over the election of a legislature which would choose a United States senator, and from all sides Clay was urged to be a candidate. He did not publicly say that he would be, but it was rather well understood that an anti-Jackson victory would lead to this result. "If we fail," Clay wrote his friend, J. S. Johnston, late in July, "it will be because the power of corruption is superior to the power of truth." "Prodigious efforts, seconded by a vast expenditure of money, are making from Washington," he said, but a victory was achieved. Kentucky, which two years before had been swept clean by the Jackson men, now presented a satisfactory, though by no means large majority against him. From all directions Mr. Clay received requests that he should take a place in the Senate. Daniel Webster and many representatives of the old Federalist and Adams element in New England, now his devoted friends, warmly urged him to go to Washington. In October, he wrote to Judge Brooke that he was still considering whether he could subdue his "repugnance to the service." Webster was most emphatic in his wish that Clay would join him at the capital. They were confronted by "an interesting and an arduous session." "Everything," he said, "is to be attacked. . . . Not only the tariff, but the Constitution itself in its elementary and fundamental provisions will be assailed with talent, vigor and union.

Everything is to be debated, as if nothing had ever been settled. . . . It would be an infinite gratification to have your aid, or rather your lead. . . . Everything valuable in the government is to be fought for, and we need your arm in the fight.”¹

The anti-Jackson majority in the legislature was not large, but it sufficed. Mr. Clay's principal competitor for the place was John J. Crittenden, who at once retired from the contest. Their relations on this occasion were entirely cordial,² and remained so. Crittenden was one of Clay's firmest friends and had been “proscribed” by Jackson on this account. Through Clay's influence he had been appointed District-Attorney of the United States for Kentucky by President Adams, and had been removed by Jackson. He had been nominated for a vacant place on the Supreme Bench after Clay had declined it, but the Senate, under the Jackson influence, had refused to confirm the appointment.³ Crittenden had stumped the state with Clay against Jackson and, deserving as he was of advancement, he was without a thought of standing in the way of the best interests of his chief or of his party. The

¹ Colton, *Private Correspondence*, p. 318.

² *Life of Crittenden*, edited by his daughter, Vol. I, p. 81.

³ The citizens of Logan County, Kentucky, desirous of tendering a “public entertainment” to Crittenden in the summer of 1829, wrote him a letter in which the following passages occur: “A new standard is introduced to decide qualifications for office. The question is not now as in the days of the Republican Jefferson, ‘Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful?’ No, the only questions now propounded are, ‘Is he a true Swiss? Did he vote against my competitor? Has he fought for me? Has he echoed my slanders against Henry Clay?’”—*Life of Crittenden*, Vol. I, p. 76.

Jackson candidate was Colonel Richard M. Johnson, who was credited with having killed Tecumseh at the battle of the Thames. He had held a seat in the Senate from 1819 until 1829, and it was now desired by his friends that he should return to the place. The vote which was taken on November 10, 1831, was seventy-three for Henry Clay and sixty-four for Colonel Johnson.

Mr. Clay went to Washington in time for the opening of Congress in December, 1831, after an absence of two and a half years. He was the avowed candidate of his party for the presidency, at the election to be held in the following year. He fully knew the political hazard involved in his active entry into congressional debate, but in this national emergency he felt it a duty to heed the advice of his friends, and give freely of what he was possessed for the public welfare. His coming was a welcome event to them, and he lost no time in taking bold positions upon the great questions brought forward by the Jackson administration, and by the threatening course of South Carolina. It was always Clay's personal misfortune, as a presidential candidate, to hold positive opinions which he never hesitated to express. They were uttered courageously, sometimes perhaps too heartily and impulsively. He did not shirk a duty when it confronted him, and though he pass down to posterity as the great pacificator and the great compromiser, there was little enough of this quality in his own personal character. He had nothing to surrender at times when merely to have been silent might have profited him much.

Clay had scarcely arrived in Washington to begin

his term as a United States senator, when he was formally nominated as the candidate for President of those who were "opposed to the reëlection of Andrew Jackson." The custom of naming presidential candidates in conventions was now becoming established, and about 160 representatives from seventeen states and the District of Columbia (eighteen after one delegate had come from Tennessee) appeared in Baltimore on December 12, 1831, for the purpose of presenting to the nation the name of Henry Clay. Indeed, all the states were represented, except South Carolina and some in the extreme South and West. James Barbour of Virginia who had been Governor of his state, United States Senator, Secretary of War and Minister to England, was made the permanent chairman of the convention, and early in the proceedings a letter from Henry Clay was read. Not unmindful of the fact that his name was prominently mentioned as the choice of the delegates, he desired it to be understood that if any other candidate were selected, their action would have his "hearty acquiescence and concurrence." He had a wish to lay these sentiments before the convention in person, but he had resorted instead to a letter, since it had appeared to him that he could not do so "without incurring the imputation of presumptuousness, or indelicacy."

Immediately after the letter had been read, Mr. Clay was nominated by Peter R. Livingston of New York, and seconded by General Dearborn of Massachusetts. As each delegate's name was called by the secretary, he rose in his place to express his preference for a candidate. All named Henry Clay

and he became the choice of the convention amid "loud and reiterated plaudits." John Sergeant, a prominent member of the Philadelphia bar, who had served several terms in Congress, notably during the Missouri debates, and had led the Panama Mission while Clay was Secretary of State, was nominated for Vice-President. A committee consisting of one member from each state was appointed to inform the candidate of the action of the convention, and five of the number at once went to Washington to notify Mr. Clay of what had been done. They returned in a few hours bearing a letter from him.

"With my respectful and cordial acknowledgments," said he, "you will be pleased to communicate to the convention my acceptance of their nomination with the assurance that whatever may be the event of it, our common country shall ever find me faithful to the Union and the Constitution, to the principles of public liberty, and to those great measures of national policy which have made us a people, prosperous, respected and powerful."¹ After marching in a procession to the mansion of Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, to pay their respects to that venerable Revolutionary patriot, now more than ninety-four years of age, the delegates returned to their homes, and Henry Clay was officially a candidate before the country for the presidential chair, against Jackson, whom his friends were determined to favor with a second term.

The first subject to engage Mr. Clay's attention in the Senate was the "American system," but he was

¹ *Niles' Register* for 1831-1832, p. 301 *et seq.*

not long in identifying himself with the other great issue of the campaign, the national bank. His popular support largely came from the manufacturing states, and it was perfectly well understood that if the "black tariff" were changed with his approval and consent, it would be not far in the direction of any sacrifice of its protective features. While South Carolina's protests were determined, there were few to believe that she meant violent action. It was plain, however, that the public debt was being rapidly paid off; that the revenue must be reduced, if a large surplus were not to be accumulated; and that these circumstances would soon become powerful motives with Jackson and his party, so desirous of strengthening itself in the affections of the democratic masses, for making an end to the protective system which Clay had done so much to establish.

The leader did not spare himself in the contest which soon opened. He held a meeting of the friends of protection, drawn from both houses of Congress, and determined upon a course of action for them which John Quincy Adams,—returned in his diary to his splenetic judgments of Clay as of other men,—regarded as "exceedingly peremptory and dogmatic." Mr. Adams now appeared in the House, "turned boy again" as Clay happily said, and they met for the first time since their memorable years together as President and Secretary of State. The plan was to reduce the revenue by taking the duties from tea, coffee, spices, indigo, wines and other articles not produced in America, a policy which, therefore, would leave undisturbed the up-

rising native industries. Mr. Adams as well as Edward Everett, at whose home the meeting was held, believed that some of Mr. Clay's suggestions would be a defiance not only to the South but also to the President. Clay said, however, that "he did not care who it defied. To preserve, maintain and strengthen the 'American system,' he would defy the South, the President and the devil." The meeting, Mr. Adams continues, "with the exception of myself was as obsequious as he was super-presidential." ¹

Mr. Clay very shortly introduced into the Senate a resolution expressive of his views, as he had voiced them at this meeting. He spoke with all his accustomed spirit of eloquence, first on January 11, 1832, and then, more extensively and with really impressive ability, on February 2d, 3d and 6th in discourses which, taken together, formed, as Schurz truly says, a text-book for protectionists for many years.

In his view of the case, Mr. Clay's "American system" had brought its own full justification. "If I were to select any term of seven years since the adoption of the present Constitution, which exhibited a scene of the most wide-spread dismay and desolation," he said, "it would be exactly that term of seven years which immediately preceded the establishment of the Tariff of 1824." "If a term of seven years were to be selected of the greatest prosperity which this people have enjoyed since the establishment of their present Constitution," he continued, "it would be exactly that period of seven years

¹ *Memoirs*, Vol. VIII, p. 445 et seq.

which immediately followed the passage of the Tariff of 1824."

In the course of his speech, upon a subject which it is never easy to make entertaining, there were some signs of lagging interest. To this Clay was not accustomed and he instantly regained attention by a clever allusion to the Vice-President. Calhoun, with sombre, sphinx-like countenance, his metaphysical theories of government coursing through his mind, was the presiding officer. Clay suddenly adverted to the South Carolinian's recent address to the people of the United States. In this he did not say that he himself believed a protective tariff to be unconstitutional; he asserted only that such an opinion was held by others. It must be inferred then that the author of the address was of another view. Mr. Calhoun immediately aroused, and said that, if the senator from Kentucky alluded to him, he would state that he believed the protective policy to be unconstitutional. This was Mr. Clay's opportunity and he continued: "When, sir, I contended with you side by side, and with perhaps less zeal than you exhibited in 1816, I did not understand you then to consider the policy forbidden by the Constitution."

To this the Vice-President retorted that the constitutional question at the time was not under discussion, and that he had never expressed any opinion different from the one he now entertained. "It is true the question was not debated in 1816," answered Clay, "and why not? Because it was not debatable; it was then believed not fairly to arise. . . . What was not dreamed of before, or in

1816, and scarcely thought of in 1824, is now made by excited imaginations to assume the imposing form of a serious constitutional barrier."¹

The interest of the Senate was immediately regained by this spirited interchange, and the discussion proceeded with many allusions to the "honorable gentleman from South Carolina" which kept every one in a pleasant condition of amusement and expectancy. From Calhoun Clay passed to Albert Gallatin who had lately attacked the "American system," "a man," said Clay very angrily, "although long a resident of this country," with "no feelings, no attachments, no sympathies, no principles, in common with our people." Fifty years before Pennsylvania "took him to her bosom, and warmed, and cherished, and honored him." How had he manifested his gratitude? "By aiming a vital blow at a system endeared to her by a thorough conviction that it is indispensable to her prosperity." There was no such thing as free trade. "The call for it," said he, "is as unavailing as the cry of a spoiled child in its nurse's arms for the moon or the stars that glitter in the firmament of Heaven." Trade could not be free unless the foreign country, as well as this country, would agree to make it so. What was called free trade was merely the "British colonial system." This it was which the United States was invited to adopt.

From time to time General Hayne interposed a remark in behalf of South Carolina. In response to one of these interjections Mr. Clay said :

"With respect to this Union, Mr. President, the

¹ Colton, Vol. V, pp. 447-448.

truth cannot be too generally proclaimed, nor too thoroughly inculcated that it is necessary to the whole and to all the parts—necessary to those parts, indeed in different degrees, but vitally necessary to each—and that threats to disturb or dissolve it among any of the parts would be quite as indiscreet and improper as would be threats from the residue to exclude those parts from the pale of its benefits. The great principle which lies at the foundation of all free governments is that the majority must govern; from which there is or can be no appeal but to the sword. The majority ought to govern wisely, equitably, moderately and constitutionally, but govern it must, subject only to that terrible appeal. If ever one, or several states, being a minority can, by menacing a dissolution of the Union, succeed in forcing an abandonment of great measures deemed essential to the interests and prosperity of the whole, the Union from that moment is practically gone. It may linger on in form and name, but its vital spirit has fled forever.”

He again appealed to the spirit of Marion, Sumter and Pickens and asked the people “to pause, solemnly pause and contemplate the frightful precipice which lies directly before them.” “To retreat,” he continued, “may be painful and mortifying to their gallantry and pride, but it is to retreat to the Union, to safety, and to those brethren with whom, or with whose ancestors, they, or their ancestors, have won on fields of glory imperishable renown. To advance is to rush on certain and inevitable disgrace and destruction.”

Danger to the Union did not lie “on the side of

persistence in the American system, but on that of its abandonment. What," he asked, "would the Union be without Pennsylvania and New York, those mammoth members of our confederacy?" Let it be supposed that they, "firmly persuaded that their industry was paralyzed and their prosperity blighted by the enforcement of the British colonial system, under the delusive name of free trade," were to question the authority of the Union. In concluding Mr. Clay said to the South Carolinians: "However strong their convictions may be, they are not stronger than ours. Between the points of the preservation of the system and its absolute repeal, there is no principle of union."

If a particular provision operated immoderately upon any quarter, he would assist in its modification, but he left little room for Calhoun or Hayne to hope for favor at the hands of him, or his protectionist allies. The Senate passed his resolution and in June, 1832, a bill expressive of his views, known as the Tariff of 1832, was enacted by Congress. But the reduction of the duties on articles, mostly luxuries, not produced in the United States was so slight, that it did not materially affect the surplus, while South Carolina's anger grew apace.

Upon other public questions of vital importance in giving direction to the presidential campaign, Senator Clay, as the opposition candidate, was listened to with similar attention. His words traveled the length and breadth of the land. He aided in rejecting Jackson's nomination of Martin Van Buren to be Minister to England. He led the contest with honest delight. Mr. Clay made his ob-

jections rest principally upon the fact that the President had already sent Mr. Van Buren abroad, taking for granted the Senate's consent ; and upon Van Buren's action while Secretary of State in espousing, as Clay believed, the British side on a subject left open by the preceding Secretary of State, no other than Mr. Clay himself. This change of policy had been explained, tactlessly enough, on the ground that, in the election of 1828, the people of the United States had rebuked the political party from which the proposal had come. This was an excellent opportunity to avenge an attack so personal and how any one could have anticipated that Van Buren's name would slip through the Senate with Clay upon the scene passes competent understanding. It was an opportunity, too, for an attack upon Jackson for his system of proscribing his enemies, and of making the government a partisan political machine. Indeed, it was Clay's speech on the Van Buren nomination which directly led to Marcy's frank, and since famous declaration that "to the victors belong the spoils." In ascribing blame to Van Buren for this policy Mr. Clay said : "It is a detestable system drawn from the worst period of the Roman republic, and if it were to be perpetuated—if the offices, honors and dignities of the people are to be put up to a scramble, and to be decided by the results of every presidential election, our government and institutions becoming intolerable, would finally end in a despotism as inexorable as that at Constantinople."

Van Buren's name called for a very close trial of party strength, and it was rejected only by Cal-

houn's casting vote. The South Carolinian found as much satisfaction in his course, as did Mr. Clay, for the Van Buren faction in order to get Calhoun out of the way had brought to the "old hero's" attention an interesting fact which seemed earlier to have escaped him. While Clay was abusing Jackson in the open House for his conduct during the Indian war in Florida, Calhoun, as Secretary of War in Monroe's cabinet, was making an effort in another direction to have the general punished for his high-handed proceedings. Knowledge of this immediately caused Jackson to regard as an enemy one who had heretofore seemed to be a friend, and Calhoun no less than Clay, though on very different ground, found great pleasure in an act which they¹ believed would serve to make an end to Jackson's principal favorite. They yet knew little of the "hero's" revengeful spirit, or of his great personal power. This "creature," as Van Buren seemed and really was, soon became Vice-President and then President of the United States, solely because it was Jackson's desire so to reward a faithful retainer.

The national bank, it will be remembered, had been chartered largely through Clay's influence after the War of 1812. It had done its part well, and when its twenty years' lease of life should expire in 1836, it was assumed that another would be given. Unhappily for it and its friends, the bank, or some of its branches, was adjudged by Jackson to be operated in antagonism to his political plans, and in his first message to Congress in December, 1829, he threatened to close the institution. His hostility

¹ Hunt, *Calhoun*, pp. 112-113.

grew with each annual message, creating a very anxious feeling in financial circles. There was no imminent need of pressing the issue in 1831, but Clay had a wish to bring the matter before the country, certain that Jackson would be much injured in the presidential contest, if Congress passed the bill renewing the charter, and the President should veto it. Both houses, therefore, proceeded to a discussion of the question and, having passed the measure extending the bank's powers by comfortable majorities, sent it to the President, who promptly took the dare and returned the bill with his disapproval.

The veto message came on July 10, 1832. It was a stump speech of the kind calculated to win great applause among those classes of the people who followed Jackson with such implicit confidence. The bank was a monopoly which, if popular liberty were to continue, must be destroyed. The orators in the Senate, Clay and Webster at their head, at once seized upon the message as the text for long and able speeches. The summer was wearing on and discussion seemed to gain in acrimony with the weather. Benton, having made himself the spokesman of Jackson, was in the very centre of the *mêlée*. His kinship with Mrs. Clay did not moderate the language which one leader employed in reference to the other, and amid wild scenes the President's veto was sustained. The vote was twenty-two to nineteen, it being practically assured from the beginning that the necessary two-thirds majority could not be obtained. It was, nevertheless, a political issue of which Clay felt very proud, as he did also of his position on the subject of the public lands.

Now that the public debt was being extinguished and there was to be no more need of large Federal revenues, an Arcadian belief arose that the national domain should be partitioned among the states. Clay had come out boldly, though perhaps not quite willingly, since the expression of his views at this time was forced upon him by his enemies, in favor of a policy which he advocated with energy and ability for many years. Jackson wished Congress to cede and surrender the public lands at nominal prices to the states in which they were situated. This was a sop to the new states, and took no account of the sacrifices which had been made by the older portions of the Union in the acquisition of the public domain. Clay, on the other hand, desired the Federal government to keep control of the lands, and sell them gradually, giving the proceeds to all the states according to their population, to be applied to educational purposes, and the promotion of internal improvements. "What especially would be the situation of Virginia?" Clay asked in the Senate as he reviewed the proposal of his opponents. "She magnanimously ceded an empire in extent for the common benefit. And now it is proposed not only to withdraw that empire from the object of its solemn dictation to the use of all the states, but to deny her any participation in it and appropriate it exclusively to the benefit of the new states carved out of it."

Mr. Clay reached heights of eloquence on this subject. "The right of the Union to the public lands," he said, "is incontestable. It ought not to be considered debatable. It never was questioned

but by a few, whose monstrous heresy, it was probably supposed, would escape animadversion from the enormity of the absurdity and the utter impracticability of the success of the claim. The right of the whole is sealed by the blood of the Revolution, founded upon solemn deeds of cession from sovereign states, deliberately executed in the face of the world, or resting upon neutral treaties concluded with foreign powers, on ample equivalents contributed from the common treasury of the people of the United States. . . . Can you imagine that the states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee would quietly renounce their right in all public lands west of them? No, sir! No, sir! They would wade to their knees in blood, before they would make such an unjust and ignominious surrender."

Mr. Clay, by able arguments, caused his views to prevail in the Senate, but the measure was not acted upon in the House of Representatives. Thus with an enlightened policy on the subject of the public lands, friendship for the bank and for the "American system" of which he stood as the particular champion, unalterable hostility to the doctrine of nullification as it was advanced in South Carolina, and opposition to all the sins of Jacksonism, petty and great, Clay went before the people of the United States as a presidential candidate in 1832. He and his friends felt certain that they would win. How could the party fail with such a leader on such a platform, against such an enemy—"the lank, lean, famished forms from fen and forest, and the four quarters of the Union," which on March 4, 1829, to use words once employed by Clay, had

“gathered together in the halls of patronage”¹ Surely the “gallant Harry of the West” would sweep the Union and make the four years gone by seem a mere nightmare in the history of the republic.

It is true that Jackson was favored by a number of circumstances aside from his control of a party machinery, now being constructed for the first time and of incalculable use to him in the contest. He had popularized himself by some threats which had escaped him, to hang Calhoun as a traitor, and by the sentiments which he had so bluntly expressed that the Union must be preserved. This deprived Clay of any advantage that he personally might have got from his opposition to the nullification movement. Jackson profited, too, by the introduction into politics of the subject of free masonry. He was an active Mason. Clay also belonged to the order, though he had not recently attended its meetings, and the anti-Masons decided to put forward a candidate of their own. They even wished Clay to make way for them so that they themselves could bring Jacksonism to an end, but he said very truly, and in emphatic language, that masonry or anti-masonry had nothing whatever to do with politics. He wrote privately to Brooke that, in his opinion, one form of despotism would not be materially better than the other, and if it were Jackson against the anti-Masons it would be difficult for him to make a choice.

Thus the opposition was divided and Clay lost much in many states which he might otherwise have

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 463.

carried with ease. The bank entered the campaign with pamphlets and circulars in its own behalf. To reasoning men such an educational process commended itself warmly, but the "old hero" in a death grapple with the "monster monopoly" was a pleasing picture to the unlettered masses. Instead of "Clay's rags," as the bank-notes were called, they were promised hard money. The "corrupt bargain" was brought out to do duty again; indeed, it had never been withdrawn from service. The defeat which Clay suffered was overwhelming. Of 288 electoral votes only forty-nine were for him,—those of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Kentucky, Delaware and five votes in Maryland. The popular vote was 707,217 for Jackson, 328,561 for Clay, and 254,720 for William Wirt, the anti-Masonic candidate.

That Mr. Clay's discouragement was great as he surveyed the scene is attested in a letter to his friend Brooke under date of January 17, 1833, when he said: "As to politics, we have no past or future. After forty-four years of existence under the present Constitution, what single principle is fixed? The bank? No. Internal improvements? No. The tariff? No. Who is to interpret the Constitution? We are as much afloat at sea as the day when the Constitution went into operation. There is nothing certain, but that the will of Andrew Jackson is to govern, and that will fluctuates with the change of every pen which gives expression to it."¹

The election did nothing to pacify the South Carolinians, who felt that they had as little to gain from Jackson as from Clay. They had voted for

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 347.

neither one nor the other. Their electoral votes were cast for Governor John Floyd of Virginia, in whom they saw friendship for their particular views as to state sovereignty. It was clearly discerned that they would press their doctrine that the tariff law enacted at the last session of Congress, and signed by the President, was not binding upon them, and very likely by violent means. All the members returned to the second session of the Twenty-second Congress with the conviction that a national crisis was at hand. The legislature of South Carolina in October had called a convention to meet in the next month, and this body formally declared the tariff laws of the United States void and of no effect in that state. Methods of enforcing the extraordinary resolve were prescribed.

The date set for this defiance of the Federal government was February, 1833.¹ It was confidently believed by Calhoun and his friends that the announcement of their policy would awaken a sympathetic response in other parts of the South, as this state's course in 1860 actually did. But the time was not yet ripe for it. Even in South Carolina itself complete unanimity of sentiment lacked,² and those who rode forward, under Calhoun's lead, were not a little afraid that they had gone too gaily out to the fray, especially when they read Jackson's proclamation of December 10th. It combined fatherly appeal with substantial threats, which left no room for doubt that, if necessary, the "old hero" himself would invade South Carolina, as he had invaded

¹ All faithfully described in Hunt's *Calhoun*, p. 149 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 171 *et seq.*

Florida, to chastise the Seminoles. He made short work of all of Calhoun's labored metaphysical speculations about nullification. "The Constitution of the United States forms a government not a league," he said, "and whether it be formed by a compact between the states or in any other manner, its character is the same. . . . I consider the power to annul a law of the United States incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed. . . . Our Constitution does not contain the absurdity of giving power to make laws and another power to resist them. To say that any state may at pleasure secede from the Union is to say that the United States are not a nation."

While the South Carolina manifestoes produced almost no enthusiasm in other states, Jackson's proclamation nearly everywhere met with warm response. Calhoun saw that he was face to face with a difficult situation. That he would be needed upon the floor of the Senate he very well understood, so Hayne stepped out to make a place for him, and he resigned the Vice-President's chair. Military measures looking to the state's defense were adopted by the people, and Calhoun's journey to Washington was dramatic. As they crowded to see him pass, some, with Jackson's words ringing in their ears, must have doubted whether he would come back alive.

In this emergency there was need of accommoda-

tion by compromise. If it were not effected, none could certainly foretell the result. On both sides, despite an appearance of great earnestness, there were movements looking toward a retreat from the advanced ground which each had come to occupy. The "American system" must suffer on the one hand, and the so-called right of nullification on the other. Soon after Christmas, the House of Representatives received a compromise tariff bill from the Committee on Ways and Means. The same Congress which less than six months before was ready to increase the duties to almost any height, upon the demand of the protectionists of the North and West, was now ready to sweep them away. The new House bill contemplated reducing them to the level of 1816, when the system of favoring native industries through the tariff was begun.

This plan might have succeeded but for South Carolina's counter measures, following Jackson's proclamation. "Old Hickory" was aroused now, as he had not been before, and on January 16th he laid before Congress in a special message the information which he had received concerning the attitude of the nullifiers. He asked for additional authority wherewith to enforce the revenue laws. He announced privately that he had put himself into communication with the Unionists of South Carolina, and if Congress did not support him, he would march 200,000 men into the state upon hearing of any violent step taken to carry the nullification measures into effect.¹ Congress, however, was not unmindful of Jackson's recommendations on such a

¹ Hunt, *Calhoun*, pp. 178-179.

subject and it at once brought forward a measure known to the South Carolinians as the "Bloody Bill." It should be called, said Representative McDuffie upon one occasion, in the House, "an act to subvert the sovereignty of the states of this Union, to establish a consolidated government without limitation of powers, and to make the civil subordinate to the military power."

The Senate continued to debate this Force Bill and the House the Tariff Bill, and there was no immediate prospect of any understanding being arrived at as late as on February 11th, only three weeks before the life of the Twenty-second Congress would expire. South Carolina had meanwhile set forward the date upon which she would put Calhoun's theory into operation, and her great leader in the Senate continued to argue his points with much ability ; he gave signs of yielding nothing of his faith in his peculiar view of the nature of the Union established under the Constitution.

Clay found no pleasure in surveying the scene. His friend, Senator John M. Clayton, of Delaware, looking upon the troubled faces of the South Carolina delegation in Congress, said one day : "Clay, these are fine fellows. It won't do to let old Jackson hang them. We must save them." On January 17th Clay was trying to evolve some plan of settlement. He had not yet matured it, and was not very hopeful of achieving anything. On that date he wrote his friend Brooke : "Any plan that I might offer would be instantly opposed, because I offered it. Sometimes I have thought that, considering how I have been and still am treated by both

parties [the tariff and the anti-tariff] I would leave them to fight it out as well as they can. The lingering hopes for my country prevail over these feelings of a just resentment, and my judgment tells me that, disregarding them, I ought to the last to endeavor to do what I can to preserve its institutions, and reëstablish confidence and concord.”¹

It is said that in the next following days Clay and Calhoun had a number of conferences,² in which they mutually agreed upon a plan of action. Clay meanwhile had also consulted with a number of Pennsylvania and other manufacturers, as to the course which he was about to adopt. He told them that if they did not accede to some modifications now, they would very probably have changes forced upon them by the next Congress, already elected and of known hostility to the “American system.” These considerations, coupled with knowledge of the state of affairs in South Carolina, presented to them by one whom they esteemed and trusted as a particular friend, were effective in winning them over to his point of view.

On February 11th Mr. Clay gave notice to the Senate that he should on the following day “ask leave to introduce a bill to modify the various acts imposing duties on imports.”³ Agreeable to this announcement, on Tuesday, February 12th, Mr. Clay rose in the Senate, presented his bill and spoke upon the subject at length. His general plan called for a tariff of twenty per cent. *ad valorem* upon ar-

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 347.

² John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, Vol. VIII, p. 524.

³ Gales and Seaton's *Register*, Vol. IX, Part 1, p. 431.

ticles which were subject to duty at all. Where the duties now exceeded this amount, they were to be reduced one-tenth every second year until 1841. Then one-half the remaining excess was to be taken off, and in 1842 the rest of the excess, bringing the rates down to the general *ad valorem* level. By this gradual method it was believed that the manufacturers could and would accommodate themselves to lower duties. If, after the nine years had passed, they felt that they could not, Mr. Clay thought that redress might be hopefully sought from "posterity."

His language and manner, as befitted the occasion, were conciliatory upon the subject of South Carolina, as well as in reference to the protective system, which seemed to be almost a part of his own fibre. He wanted harmony, he said eloquently at one point in his speech. "I wish to see the restoration of those ties which have carried us triumphantly through two wars. I delight not in this perpetual turmoil. Let us have peace and become once more united as a band of brothers." He believed that he understood South Carolina a little better since he had returned to Congress for the present session. She disclaimed the intention of employing force in the attainment of her objects. Her purposes were of a civil nature. She thought that she could "oust the United States from her limits" by a "law suit." He had no belief in the success of any such contention. The state had been "rash, intemperate and greatly in error," and had "made up an issue unworthy of her." She was merely doing, however, with more rashness what some other states had attempted to do. He did not fail to draw

a picture of what South Carolina's situation would be, if she were an independent state, and it was one little calculated to attract her to her liberty. Rising to another height he exclaimed :

“If there be any who want civil war, who want to see the blood of any portion of our countrymen spilt, I am not one of them ; I wish to see war of no kind ; but above all do I not desire to see a civil war. When war begins, whether civil or foreign, no human foresight is competent to foresee when, or how, or where it is to terminate. But when a civil war shall be lighted up in the bosom of our own happy land, and armies are marching, and commanders are winning their victories, and fleets are in motion on our coast, tell me, if you can, tell me, if any human being can tell, its duration. God alone knows where such a war will end. In what state will be left our institutions ? In what state our liberties ? I want no war ; above all, no war at home.”

Though South Carolina were rash, he did not wish “to disgrace her, nor any other member of this Union.” He did not desire “to see dimmed the lustre of one single star of that glorious confederacy which constitutes our political sun ; still less do I wish to see it blotted out and its light obliterated forever.” He asked the senators to look for one moment beyond considerations of party, give their attention to this bill, and “heal before they are yet bleeding the wounds of our distracted country.”¹

After a few other speakers had briefly presented their views, Calhoun rose in his place and expressed

¹Gales and Seaton's *Register*, p. 471.

his approval of the object and terms of the bill, whereupon there was "tumultuous approbation" in the galleries. The chair indeed ordered them to be cleared, but upon an expression of disapproval by one or two members, this direction was withdrawn and the crowd of spectators remained, following the course of events with grave and attentive interest.

Calhoun spoke at great length on the 15th. Webster replied, and the opposite views of the nature of the Constitution were again set forth *in extenso*. Webster, however, condemned the Compromise because it sacrificed the tariff, to which his section was now very much devoted,¹ and Clay spoke again on February 25th with the hope of reconciling the protectionists to the measure. In the ardor of the moment he probably said more in favor of the protective character of the scheme than he could well substantiate. It was only his great power, as a leader among the tariff men, that made the bill for a gradual reduction of duties in any way savory, and he now spoke with all the vehemence and fascination which he so well knew how to command. He returned to the immediate need of propitiating the South, if peace were to be maintained. He again deplored civil war and did not hesitate to allude to the augmented fear which he would feel regarding it, were it conducted by Andrew Jackson. "In the midst of magazines," he asked, "who knows when the fatal spark may produce a terrible explosion? The battle once begun, where is its limit? What latitude will circumscribe its rage?

¹ Lodge, *Webster*, pp. 213, 218 *et seq.*

Who is to command our armies? When, and where, and how is the war to cease? In what condition will the peace leave the 'American system,' the American Union and what is more than all, American liberty? I cannot profess to have a confidence, which I have not, in this administration, but, if I had all confidence in it, I should still wish to pause and, if possible by any honorable adjustment, to prevent awful consequences, the extent of which no human wisdom can foresee."

The "enforcing bill" should not be passed alone; it must be accompanied by "the bill of peace." He continued:

"The difference between the friends and the foes of the Compromise, under consideration, is that they would in the enforcing act send forth alone a flaming sword. We would send out that also, but along with it the olive branch, as a messenger of peace. They cry out, 'The law! the law! the law! Power! Power! Power!' We too reverence the law, and bow to the supremacy of its obligations, but we are in favor of the law, executed in mildness, and of power tempered with mercy. They, as we think, would hazard a civil commotion, beginning in South Carolina and extending God only knows where. While we would vindicate the Federal government, we are for peace, if possible, union and liberty. We want no war, above all, no civil war, no family strife. We want to see no sacked cities, no desolated fields, no smoking ruins, no streams of American blood shed by American arms."

He was charged with ambition. He had none.

"I am no candidate for any office in the gift of the people of these states, united or separated ; I never wish, never expect to be. Pass this bill, tranquilize the country, restore confidence and affection in the Union, and I am willing to go home to 'Ashland' and renounce public service forever. I should there find in its groves, under its shades, on its lawns, amid my flocks and herds, in the bosom of my family, sincerity and truth, attachment, and fidelity, and gratitude which I have not always found in the walks of public life. Yes, I have ambition ; but it is the ambition of being the humble instrument in the hands of Providence to reconcile a divided people ; once more to revive concord and harmony in a distracted land—the pleasing ambition of contemplating the glorious spectacle of a free, united, prosperous and fraternal people."

Thus did Clay allay and pacify opposition ; thus did he "draw the lightning from all the clouds which were lowering over the country."¹ The Force Bill and the Tariff Bill were passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President. To Clay's own friends, if not to all others, it seemed as though he had won "the imperishable glory of preventing civil war."² James Madison wrote, complimenting him in the warmest terms. The old Virginia sage hoped that in the period of nine or ten years allowed to the manufacturers under the Compromise that they would learn "to swim without the bladders which have supported them," and that such a situation would never arise again. Never-

¹ Nicholas Biddle to Clay, February 28, 1833.

² *Private Correspondence*, p. 350.

theless, he was not in any way pleased with the outlook. He foresaw what in the fulness of time came to pass. It was "painful" for him to consider the signs of a "permanent incompatibility and even hostility of interests between the South and the North," and the "contagious zeal in vindicating and varnishing the doctrine of nullification and secession; the tendency of all of which, whatever be the intention, is to create a disgust with the Union and then to open the way out of it." He foresaw that the tariff would make way for slavery as a subject of discord. "What madness in the South," said he, "to look for greater safety in disunion! It would be worse than jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire from a fear of the frying-pan."¹ Something akin to this did it indeed prove to be years after Mr. Madison's and Mr. Clay's voices were heard no longer in the land.

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 359, 365.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAR AGAINST JACKSON

THE importance of Clay's service as a pacificator in the great sectional difference of 1833 seemed at the time immense. Nearly everywhere, except in South Carolina, his interposition was deeply appreciated. It was believed that he had prevented a civil war which, with Jackson at its head, would have been not only sanguinary, but also destructive of the character of the government. Clay himself lived to doubt the value of his interference, especially as Calhoun upon going home disseminated the view that nullification had proven to be all that he had ever claimed for it. It had been South Carolina's remedy against the Federal government on a subject of oppression and the people of the state seemed to press it still closer to their hearts. Now that the Civil War has come and gone, and we are enabled to view the history of the time in sober perspective, it seems clear that the lesson to the South might much better have been administered thus early in the development of the spirit of disunion and separation. The experience then might have been quite as salutary, with the expenditure of much less blood and treasure; yet slavery would have remained. That was the real ground of difference, though men like Madison, Clay and Jackson could not perceive it, if indeed did any one.

The tariff was but a symptom of economic disorders which had not yet been correctly diagnosed.

Up to the day of the battle of Bull Run, and indeed for a year or two afterward, what would most men not have given for some basis of conciliation, understanding and peace? It is only by comprehending how great was the desire to avoid a clash between the states, and upon what proper sentiments it was founded, that we can conceive of the importance which a service like Clay's assumed in the public mind.

Though the gradually falling tariff was displeasing to the manufacturers, they soon became reconciled to their situation. Peleg Sprague wrote to Clay on March 19th that in six months' time the Compromise would be considered in New England "as the most wise, patriotic, beneficent and splendid act of legislation that any individual in this country has ever achieved."¹ Abbott Lawrence expressed a similar view, and Webster himself soon forgave Clay for opposing him. Their cordial relations, indeed, had never been interrupted and they were the firmest of friends. Upon his return to "Ashland," after the close of the arduous session, Clay immediately occupied himself with his farming interests, now almost entirely confined "to the rearing of all kinds of live-stock." He wrote his friend Brooke that he had in his stables and fields "the Maltese ass, the Arabian horse, the Merino and Saxe Merino sheep, the English Hereford and Durham cattle, the goat, the mule and the hog." He enjoyed them all. "The progress of

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 354.

these animals from their infancy to maturity," he continued, "presents a constantly varying subject of interest, and I never go out of my house without meeting with some of them to engage agreeably my attention. Then our fine greensward, our natural parks, our beautiful undulating country, everywhere exhibiting combinations of grass and trees, or luxuriant crops,—all conspire to render home delightful." ¹

His land bill, which had passed the Senate twice and the House once, having been the subject of a pocket veto by Jackson, after the adjournment of Congress, still occupied his mind. But for this, he wrote Brooke that he "certainly" would resign his seat in the Senate. He had no wish for place. Nothing was "so abhorrent" to his feelings as to appear to be "a teasing suppliant for office." The President's position was "full of care and vexation." It could have "no charms" for him, unless it should come as a result of "the willing suffrages of a large majority of his countrymen." It could not come in this way now. He doubted much whether "any successful opposition" could be made against "General Jackson's designated successor." He had not been treated well and had "borne the taunts of the Jackson party and principles long enough." "What," he asked, "can one man do alone against a host?" He was "worn out and exhausted in the service." He wished and needed "repose."

In a letter to Brooke a few months later he continued to express despairing views. The country

¹*Private Correspondence*, p. 361.

was governed "pretty much by the will of one man." "If that single man," said he, "were an enlightened philosopher, and a true patriot, the popular sanction which is given to all his acts, however inconsistent or extravagant, might find some justification. But when we consider that he is ignorant, passionate, hypocritical, corrupt and easily swayed by the base men who surround him, what can we think of the popular approbation which he receives?" One thing only was wanted to complete the public degradation, and that was "that he should name his successor. . . . His election once secured, the corrupt means of preserving and perpetuating power, now in successful operation at Albany, will be transferred to Washington. And there we shall have a state of things which will prepare the public mind for a dissolution of the Union, to which, unfortunately, there is less aversion now than could be wished by those who love their country. I hope that I may be deceived in these predictions ; but I fear I will not." ¹

But these were unhappy moods which came upon him at "Ashland," when out of sight and hearing of that legion of friends whose devotion excelled any ever accorded to a public man in America. He had contemplated a trip in the summer to New England, by way of Niagara Falls and the Canadian cities of the St. Lawrence, which he had never seen. He was obliged to postpone his departure until the autumn, however, and then changed his course so that he both went and came by New York City. Though he sought to travel in

¹ *Private Correspondence*. pp. 368-369.

privacy, this, as usual, was not to be his fate. "His whole route," says a contemporary biographer¹ "was like the movement of some mighty conqueror—almost one unbroken triumphal procession."

In New York a large company of prominent citizens on horseback escorted him to his lodgings. The Governor's Room in the City Hall was put at his disposal. There he received all sorts and conditions of men who came to pay their respects. In New England, shops and factories were closed, so that all classes of the people could go out to see and welcome him. Silver pitchers and other testimonials of affection were presented. "I was taken into custody," he said in one of his many speeches during the progress of the journey, "made captive of, but placed withal in such delightful bondage that I could find no strength and no desire to break away from it." He reached Washington in time for the opening of the session, when he could write to Judge Brooke: "My journey was full of gratification. In spite of my constant protestations that it was undertaken with objects of a private nature exclusively, and my uniformly declining public dinners, the people everywhere, and at most places without discrimination of parties, took possession of me and gave enthusiastic demonstrations of respect, attachment and confidence. In looking back on the scenes through which I passed, they seem to me to have resembled those of enchantment more than of real life."

The first question to confront the Senate of the new Congress was a message from Jackson concern-

¹ Mallory, Vol. I, p. 65.

ing the land bill which he had pocketed in March. This was entirely gratuitous. It was another Congress and the bill was dead, but the President wished to fling the "carcass" ¹ at Clay's feet. It was vain to say that Jackson himself had asked for the passage of a land bill. He did not want it now; in many ways this one did not conform to his wishes. It only remained for Clay to say that to withhold the veto until this time was arbitrary, unconstitutional and despotic, and that he would on the following Tuesday ask leave to introduce a new bill with similar purposes in view.

This question was wholly dwarfed, however, by the sudden and surprising resolution of the President to remove the government deposits from the United States Bank, and accomplish the ruin of the "monster," as he persisted in denominating and regarding it. Incidentally, he would disturb, if he did not paralyze, credit and trade, but this was nothing in comparison with the pleasure of executing his dear purpose in relation to a hated establishment. The storm broke at once. In his message to Congress in 1832 Jackson had questioned the safety of the government moneys in the hands of the bank and its branches, and the House had ordered an examination. By a vote of 109 to 46 it was determined that there was no ground whatever for alarm. Jackson went ahead without regard to this opinion. He had resolved to take the deposits away from the bank, and to ruin it. His only course was through the Secretary of the Treasury, who was clothed with the right to decide

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 570.

where the deposits were to be placed. In May, 1833, he reconstructed his cabinet with this object in view, transferring McLane, known to favor the bank, to the Department of State, and putting at the head of the Treasury William J. Duane, of Philadelphia, the son of the well-known editor of the *Aurora*, the vitriolic newspaper which had been so powerful in the work of driving the Federalists out of office in 1801. It was believed that he would be a willing tool, though Jackson erred in his judgment completely. So extraordinary, indeed revolutionary, did the suggestion seem to be that Duane refused to obey the order when Jackson sent it to him. Nor would he resign. If he were to go, it would be by removal from office, which was promptly effected by the President who, late in September, 1833, transferred Roger B. Taney from the Attorney-Generalship to the Treasury Department.

Taney complied at once. Nearly \$10,000,000 were in the bank, and when these funds were withdrawn, no more were to be deposited to replace them. The public money henceforth, at the Secretary's discretion, was to be put in state banks, soon known therefore as "pet banks." The fiscal affairs of the country were immediately thrown into great excitement, and the condition of the stock and money markets approached a panic. The papers bearing upon this unusual procedure came into the Twenty-third Congress at its opening and the three leaders of the Senate, Clay, Webster and Calhoun, were on duty, side by side, ready to oppose Jackson with all their resources and abilities. It was

one of the most remarkable sessions of Congress which the country has ever seen. The public crowded the galleries as though it were a play. Such oratory, such parliamentary finesse, such clever retort and debate had not been heard before in any legislative hall in America.

Mr. Clay opened the fire upon the President on December 10th, asking him to lay before the Senate a paper concerning the removal of the deposits, which led Jackson to reply that it was no affair of the Senate; his responsibility was to the people. It was December 26th before Clay's artillery was fully charged. Then he introduced two resolutions as follows :

"Resolved, that by dismissing the late Secretary of the Treasury because he would not, contrary to his sense of his own duty, remove the money of the United States in deposit with the Bank of the United States and its branches in conformity with the President's opinion, and by appointing his successor to effect such removal, which has been done, the President has assumed the exercise of a power over the Treasury of the United States, not granted to him by the Constitution and laws, and dangerous to the liberties of the people.

"Resolved, that the reasons assigned by the Secretary of the Treasury for the removal of the money of the United States, deposited in the Bank of the United States and its branches, communicated to Congress on the 3d of December, 1833, are unsatisfactory and insufficient."

Clay followed the introduction of these resolutions with a speech which was in his most effective

manner. It continued for two days, and rang up and down the Capitol, soon to reverberate through all the land. He wasted no time in going about the work in hand, for these were the words with which he began :

“ We are in the midst of a revolution hitherto bloodless, but rapidly tending toward a total change of the pure republican character of the government and to the concentration of all power in the hands of one man.”

His arraignment was strong and impressive. That Jackson had usurped authority, strained the provisions of the Constitution, consulted his own will only in regard to great public matters, and defied the legislature and other coördinate branches of the government, needed no particular demonstration. Though he still could do no wrong in the view of vast numbers of the people, Clay did not hesitate on this account. Some hyperbole may seem to lurk in the words with which he closed his remarkable second day's speech, but they were spoken with absolute sincerity, and they seemed to be the natural climax of his argument.

“ We behold,” he said, “ the usual incidents of approaching tyranny. The land is filled with spies and informers ; and detraction and denunciation are the orders of the day. People, especially official incumbents in this place, no longer dare to speak in the fearless tones of manly freedom, but in the cautious whispers of trembling slaves. The premonitory symptoms of despotism are upon us, and if Congress do not apply an instantaneous and effective remedy, the fatal collapse will soon come

on and we shall die, base, mean and abject slaves—the scorn and contempt of mankind—unpitied, unwept, unmourned.”

The distress occasioned among business men by the removal of the deposits, and a political war upon the country's most powerful fiscal agency was real. Any intelligent Executive, properly sensitive to the consequences of his actions, could not have adopted such a policy. But a rare bigot when once animated to any course, and with a determination to enforce his commands, borrowed from the battle-field, the only experience in which his life had been rich, Jackson went forward without regard for the fact that the bank was performing all its functions in an honest and effectual way; that no other agency was at hand to fill its place; and that interference with its operations would bring evil, if not ruin, to multitudes of people. They sent their petitions to Congress day after day, and Clay and Webster with great solemnity and eloquence presented them in the Senate.

One of the most remarkable scenes of the session was witnessed on March 7, 1834, when in bringing forward a memorial of a number of sufferers in Philadelphia, Clay addressed himself directly to Jackson's favorite and chosen legatee who, as Vice-President, was the presiding officer of the Senate. So earnest did the orator become that he quite unconsciously, it is said, left his place, still speaking in the most impassioned way, with all the effective gestures that accompanied his delivery, till he stood directly before the Vice-President's desk, where he continued his entreaties. “By your official and

personal relations with the President," said Clay, "you maintain with him an intercourse which I neither enjoy nor covet. Go to him and tell him, without exaggeration but in the language of truth and sincerity, the actual condition of his bleeding country. Tell him it is nearly ruined and undone by the measures which he has been induced to put in operation. Tell him that his experiment is operating on the nation like the philosopher's experiment upon a convulsed animal in an exhausted receiver, and that it must expire in agony if he does not pause, give it free and sound circulation, and suffer the energies of the people to be revived and restored. . . . Depict to him, if you can find language to portray, the heartrending wretchedness of thousands of the working classes cast out of employment. Tell him of the tears of helpless widows, no longer able to earn their bread ; and of unclad and unfed orphans who have been thrown by his policy out of the busy pursuits in which but yesterday they were gaining an honest livelihood. . . . Tell him to guard himself against the possibility of an odious comparison, with that worst of the Roman emperors who, contemplating with indifference the conflagration of the mistress of the world, regaled himself during the terrific scene in the throng of his dancing courtiers. . . . Entreat him to pause and to reflect that there is a point beyond which human endurance cannot go ; and let him not drive this brave, generous and patriotic people to madness and despair."

Thus did Clay pour out a fire that seemed to come from his very soul. He knew that he had left the

“beaten track” of debate; his apology must be found in “the anxious solicitude which I feel for the condition of the country.” He hoped that he had touched the Vice-President’s heart and excited in him “a glow of patriotism.” How successful he had been he soon learned when at the conclusion of the speech, the “old fox,” who had been looking at Clay as though he were absorbing every word in order to have it in hand to carry to his chief, called another to the chair, and going down upon the floor gravely asked Clay for a pinch of his fine Maccaboy snuff, whereupon, having received it, he quite as gravely walked away. Of course, nothing at all came of this impassioned appeal; though at a public meeting in Philadelphia it was resolved “that Martin Van Buren deserves and will receive the execration of all good men should he shirk from the responsibility of carrying to Andrew Jackson the message sent by the Honorable Henry Clay.”

On March 28th Clay’s resolutions with some immaterial amendments were passed: that by which the President was accused of an unconstitutional act, by a vote of twenty-six to twenty; the other by which the reasons given for the removal of the deposits were declared to be “unsatisfactory and insufficient,” by a vote of twenty-eight to eighteen.

A joint resolution offered by Clay, directing a restoration of the deposits to the Bank of the United States, also passed the Senate, though it failed in the House which was in control of the Jackson men. There was now war to the knife, between the President and the Senate. In response to Clay’s resolutions of censure, Jackson sent a “protest”

which he demanded should be entered upon the journal of the Senate. That body refused to receive it, denying such a right on the part of the President. Sixteen senators voted to enter the "protest," while twenty-seven voted not to do so, after three weeks of fierce debate with Clay, Webster and Calhoun on one side, and Benton leading on the other in Jackson's defense. The President was roundly denounced for usurpations of office in not forwarding the nomination of Taney, whom he had chosen to do his bidding in reference to the removal of the deposits, after two other secretaries had refused. He knew, of course, that it would be rejected. The Senate refused to confirm the names of four men appointed directors of the United States Bank. Jackson returned them with a scolding, and the Senate refused again. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia, was nominated for Minister to England. The name was rejected by the Senate. In the summer of 1834 Taney's name finally arrived; it was, of course, voted down, as expected, an act which furiously enraged Jackson, who was nevertheless obliged to appoint Levi Woodbury in his place, and hold Taney for a vacancy on the Supreme Bench.

The session ended with no net gain except a fanfare of oratory, and the conviction which promptly settled upon the country that Jackson had made an end of the bank. Business might, as soon as it could, accommodate itself to the new conditions under which it must operate, and this it proceeded to do with more success than Clay or any

of his friends had thought possible when they so vigorously denounced the action of the President. In the elections of 1834 a considerable accession to the anti-Jackson strength was seen. It was in this year that Clay in Congress gave his party the name which ever afterward attached to it. He called himself and his followers Whigs, likening them to the Whigs of England, "the champions of liberty, the friends of the people"; while upon his opponents he attempted, though unsuccessfully, to fasten the name of Tories, "supporters of executive power, of royal prerogative, of the maxim that the king could do no wrong, of the detestable doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance," recalling the much hated element in the American population during the Revolutionary War.¹

With the passing of conditions of distress in the business world, however, the "hero" seemed greater than ever before. Clay could say that the evils suffered in business circles were not so enduring as he had once feared and supposed, but he could insist that Jackson's course was no less high-handed and in violation of constitutional authority. Little enough did the hordes which "Old Hickory" led care about the Constitution. The bank, broken on the wheel of his iron will, seemed to the masses, from whom his strength was recruited, the odious monopoly which he declared it to be, and he emerged in victory.

Mr. Clay was soon called upon to subordinate all partisan reflections, to subdue his feelings, as much outraged as they had been, to the work of extri-

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 629.

cating the country from a critical situation on a foreign question, into which it had been brought by Jackson's hot impulses. France by a treaty signed in Paris on July 4, 1831, had agreed to pay the United States \$5,000,000 to indemnify the nation for damages sustained by its shipping during the wars of Napoleon. The first instalment was due, and should have been paid on February 2, 1833, but the French parliament failed to make any provision for it, and it was suggested to Jackson that he refer to the matter in his annual message to Congress in 1834. This he did in language which he would have employed in his dealings with Henry Clay, Nicholas Biddle or William J. Duane. He recommended to Congress that "a law be passed authorizing reprisals upon French property, in case provision shall not be made for the payment of the debt at the approaching session of the French Chambers." These were the words of one manifestly inexperienced in diplomacy and they were well calculated to cause grave offense.

When the mails carried the news to Europe the French government, in response to popular clamor, recalled its minister at Washington, and gave our representative in Paris his *cong  *, at once making the situation one of much gravity. Clearly something must be done and attention was again turned to Clay. As chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Senate, he took up the recommendations of the message, and it was his task, while in a measure supporting the President and preserving the national *amour propre*, to propitiate France, which clearly had a right to better treatment, if there

were to be a continuance of good feeling between the two powers. The breach was delicately approached, and further rupture avoided by the report of Clay's committee, which offered the following resolution to the Senate :

“Resolved, that it is inexpedient at this time to pass any law vesting in the President authority for making reprisals upon French property, in the contingency of provision not being made for paying to the United States the indemnity stipulated by the treaty of 1831, during the present session of the French Chambers.”

He did not enter upon any defense of Jackson for his indiscreet language ; that he could not do. Yet he refrained from the energetic denunciation which such action might have been held to deserve, and would have received, no doubt, had it involved only the nation's domestic concerns. With slight changes of phraseology, the resolution passed the Senate by a unanimous vote, and the object was accomplished. The French legislative chambers were mollified and after a few characteristic passages, which in 1836 again seemed to point to war, the money was paid and the trouble came to an end.

There was an echo of the sentiments which Mr. Clay had expressed in 1819 on the subject of the Seminole War, and at other times in reference to the Indians, in what it was his pleasure to say in February, 1835, in presenting a memorial to the Senate on behalf of the Cherokees of Georgia. He was again “the Great Commoner,” with an awakened sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed. In Georgia Indians had been driven from their lands,

and it was asked that aid be given to enable them to remove beyond the Mississippi.

It was a severe indictment of the state of Georgia for robbing the aborigines of their lands, in violation of solemn treaty provisions, iterated and often confirmed, into which Clay courageously launched. No fear of giving offense deterred him when he saw a wrong to be denounced. The Indians, he said, were a part of the human race, "as capable of pleasure and pain, and invested with as indisputable a right, as we have, to judge of and pursue their happiness. Thrust out from human society, without the sympathies of any, and placed without the pale of common justice, who is there to protect him, or to defend his rights!" "It is said," he continued, "that annihilation is the destiny of the Indian race. Perhaps it is, judging from the past. But shall we therefore hasten it? Death is the irreversible decree pronounced against the human race. Shall we accelerate its approach, because it is inevitable? No, sir. Let us treat with the utmost kindness, and the most perfect justice the aborigines whom Providence has committed to our guardianship. Let us confer upon them, if we can, the inestimable blessings of Christianity and civilization, and then, if they must sink beneath the progressive wave of civilized population, we are free from all reproach and stand acquitted in the sight of God and man."¹

Such sentiments, noble as they were, seemed like empty rhetoric to most men, and they were unhappily without influence in altering the policy toward the Indians.

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 655.

An opportunity for the continuation of the campaign against Jackson, while at the same time discussing a vital public question, was found in February, 1835, when an effort was put forth to curb the President in the baneful practice of removing faithful men from office to make places for his partisans. Clay was glad to return to the topic. He never ceased to denounce this mischievous change of public custom, and now in the Senate, with the support of most of the able leaders in that body—leaders who at the time were unsurpassed for their brilliant qualities—he attempted to show that the practice was as unconstitutional as it was inexpedient. The debate was concentrated around a bill to repeal a law of 1820, limiting the tenure of certain offices to a four-year term. Some of Jackson's firmest friends deserted him upon this issue and the measure was passed in the Senate by a vote of thirty-one to sixteen.

Again in the session of 1835-1836 Clay brought forward and spoke in advocacy of his plan for distributing among the states the proceeds of the sales of the public lands. He recalled that the issue had been forced upon him by the Jackson men in order to embarrass him as a presidential candidate in 1832. Under this impulse he had studied the question, and developed a policy to which he attached great value. A bill, embodying it, which had passed Congress near the end of the session in 1833 had been killed by Jackson in what seemed to many a wholly unconstitutional manner. Clay believed that if it had been returned with a veto by the President, it could have been passed over that

veto, and the states would now have been in the enjoyment of the money, which it was beneficently designed that they should use in behalf of internal improvements, education and the transportation to Africa of free negroes. Instead of this the national surplus was scattered about "in parcels among petty corporations." It was "applied to increase the semi-annual dividends of favorite stockholders in favorite banks."¹

But the bill, though it was passed by the Senate, failed in the House where Jackson was still in power. Clay, in the eyes of the country at this time, seemed to be not so great and so preëminent a figure, as four years before. His party was developing other leaders, and, though he did not envy them their distinction, it was a new sensation to hear others spoken of as suitable to direct it in the presidential campaign of 1836. After Clay's overwhelming defeat in 1832, many believed and said that another name should be put forward. A little surprised, not unnaturally, at the resourcefulness of a party which seemed to be of his own creation, too much can easily be made of this fact. That he was a seeker for the presidency is an assumption with which every biographer of Clay sets out, and Schurz's assertions at least are based upon only one letter in Colton's collection addressed to an unknown correspondent.² There is no reason to think that Mr. Clay had the least desire to be the Whig nominee in the hopeless contest which approached.

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 31.

² *Private Correspondence*, p. 392. Written from "Ashland," July 14, 1835.

He knew full well, by sad experience, Jackson's strength with the people. He had for two or three years foreseen Van Buren's nomination and election with the corrupt support of the administration, and no one could have had a better right to discuss the respective chances of Daniel Webster, Judge Hugh L. White, of Tennessee, now in the Senate of the United States, lately turned against Jackson, whose warm friend he had earlier been, and General William Henry Harrison, who had administered a famous defeat to a party of Indians at Tippecanoe in 1811, an "old hero" fit for a joust with Jackson.

The Whigs in truth were so disorganized that they went into the campaign without having held a national convention. It was their hope by supporting men of strength in their respective sections to throw the election into the House of Representatives, and bring about a situation similar to that which had elevated John Quincy Adams to the presidency in 1824; but the plan which had Clay's approval, if indeed he were not the originator of it, failed, for Van Buren received 170 out of 294 electoral votes, a clear majority. Harrison secured seventy-three votes from Vermont, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. White carried Georgia and Jackson's own state, Tennessee; Webster, Massachusetts; while South Carolina instructed its eleven electors to vote for W. P. Mangum.

To a man of Mr. Clay's disposition come fits of despondency, and at this time there was enough reason for one without believing that the choice of

other candidates by the Whigs in 1836 had anything materially to do with this state of his mind. The malignities of Jackson and his friends, now continuously directed against Clay—he was the principal object of them all—for nearly twelve years, were hard to bear, especially when they seemed to have the endorsement of the nation, in so far as this could be gauged by popular elections. Late in 1835 he lost his favorite and last surviving daughter, Mrs. Erwin. In June, 1836, James Madison, with whom Mr. Clay had always had the friendliest relations, died, and when he was not under some excitement, gloom was likely to possess his mind.

Though he was to be reëlected to the Senate by the legislature of Kentucky in the winter of 1836–1837, Clay often spoke of retiring to private life which, however, he must have known that he could not sincerely enjoy. It has always been a resource of public men to retire to the homes whence they have come, but the exhilaration of directing public affairs is so great that, after many years in service of this kind, and especially in parliamentary leadership, such as it had been Clay's part to play, withdrawal cannot be viewed with real pleasure. There was truth in the letter which he wrote to a number of his admirers in New York in the summer of 1837 :

“I have not for several years looked to the event of my being placed in the chair of Chief Magistrate as one that was probable. My feelings and intentions have taken a different direction. While I am not insensible to the exalted honor of filling the highest office within the gift of this great people, I have desired retirement from the cares of public

life ; and, although I have not been able fully to gratify this wish, I am in the enjoyment of comparative repose and looking anxiously forward to more. I should be extremely unwilling, without very strong reasons, to be thrown into the turmoil of a presidential canvass. Above all, I am most desirous not to seem, as in truth I am not, importunate for any public office whatever. If I were persuaded that a majority of my fellow citizens desired to place me in the highest executive office, that sense of duty by which I have ever been guided would exact obedience to their will. Candor obliges me, however, to say that I have not seen sufficient evidence that they entertain such a desire.”¹

Mr. Clay's displeasure was complete, as his term of six years as a senator came to an end, and as Jackson stepped out, leaving his office to his designated successor, amid great popular acclamation, on March 4, 1837. It was not diminished by the fact that the resolution of censure for assumptions of power, which Clay had introduced into the Senate, and which had been passed by a vote of twenty-six to twenty on March 28, 1834, had a little while before been expunged from the journals. This remarkable procedure was taken under the leadership of Benton, Jackson's particular representative in the Senate, who soon after its passage had announced his intention of making the motion. If it did not pass, he would repeat it again and again until Jackson should be freed of this imputation upon his honor and intelligence. Benton pursued

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 417.

the subject with inflexible determination. At the second session of the Congress which had passed the resolution, the proposal was voted down decisively thirty-nine to seven. The fourth time he brought the matter before the Senate at the session of 1836-1837, the Jackson men had at last gained a majority in that chamber. The legislatures of several states had instructed their senators to vote for the expunging resolution, and it became a national issue on the hustings and in the newspapers.

Benton, on December 26, 1836, the anniversary of the day upon which Clay had moved the censure, again introduced the resolution with the knowledge that if he could hold Jackson's friends together, he would succeed. Benton himself had a wish to obliterate the record, to stamp it out so that it could not be read. The senators upon whom he felt that he could rely were assembled at Boulanger's restaurant, a famous place of resort in the Washington of the day, on the evening of January 14, 1837. The meeting lasted until after midnight. It was agreed that the resolution should be called up on the following Monday and that there should be no adjournment until it had passed. "Cold hams, turkeys, rounds of beef, pickles, wines and cups of hot coffee" were to be supplied to the faithful senators in a committee-room within convenient access to the Senate chamber. It was agreed among them that the record of the censure on the manuscript journal should have broad black lines drawn around it, while across its face in bold letters, were to be written the words—"Expunged by order of the Senate this 16th day of January, 1837."

Not much speech was indulged in by Benton and his friends, who wished to bring the resolution to a vote as soon as possible. But the three great leaders, Clay, Webster and Calhoun, must be heard.¹ While they foresaw the inevitable result, they had a duty to perform, and had no thought of surrendering without vehement protest. Clay delivered in his august style an able discourse upon the subject. He reviewed Jackson's extraordinary course in reference to the removal of the deposits from the bank. "I believed then in the truth of the resolution," said Clay, "and I now in my place and under all my responsibility re-avow my unshaken conviction of it. . . . I put it, Mr. President, to the calm and deliberate consideration of the majority of the Senate, are you ready to pronounce, in the face of this enlightened community, for all time to come, and whoever may happen to be President, that the Senate dare not, in language the most inoffensive and respectful, remonstrate against any executive usurpation, whatever may be its degree or danger? For one I will not; I cannot. I believe the resolution of March, 1834, to have been true; and that it was competent to the Senate to proclaim the truth. And I solemnly believe that the Senate would have been culpably neglectful of its duty to itself, to the Constitution and to the country, if it had not announced the truth."

He argued, too, conclusively, by reference to the experience of other legislative bodies, that a journal is a record of proceedings and that nothing which has taken place can be properly or truthfully de-

¹ Meigs, *Life of Benton*, p. 230 *et seq.*

clared not to have taken place. "Are you not only destitute of all authority," he asked, "but positively forbidden to do what the expunging resolution proposes? The injunction of the Constitution to keep a journal of our proceedings is clear, express and emphatic. . . . But I would ask if there were no constitutional requirement to keep a journal, what constitutional right has the Senate of this Congress to pass in judgment upon the Senate of another Congress, and to expunge from its journal a deliberate act there recorded? Can an unconstitutional act of that Senate, supposing it to be so, justify you in performing another unconstitutional act?"

It was a "dark deed," a "foul deed," of him who had come to exercise "uncontrolled the power of the state." "In one hand he holds the purse and in the other brandishes the sword of the country. Myriads of dependents and partisans, scattered over the land, are ever ready to sing hosannas to him, and to laud to the skies whatever he does. He has swept over the government, during the last eight years, like a tropical tornado. . . . What object of his ambition is unsatisfied? When disabled from age any longer to hold the sceptre of power, he designates his successor and transmits it to his favorite. What more does he want? Must we blot, deface and mutilate the records of the country to punish the presumptuousness of expressing an opinion contrary to his own?"

"Can you make that not to be which has been?" Clay continued in one of his finest bursts. "Can you eradicate from memory and from history the

fact that in March, 1834, a majority of the Senate of the United States passed the resolution which excites your enmity? Is it your vain and wicked object to arrogate to yourselves that power of annihilating the past which has been denied to Omnipotence itself? Do you intend to thrust your hands into our hearts, and pluck out the deeply rooted convictions which are there? Or is it your design merely to stigmatize us? You cannot stigmatize us :

“ ‘ Ne’er yet did base dishonor blur our name.’ ”

Standing securely upon our conscious rectitude and bearing aloft the shield of the Constitution of our country, your puny efforts are impotent, and we defy all your power. Put the majority of 1834 in one scale, and that by which this expunging resolution is to be carried in the other, and let truth and justice, in Heaven above and on the earth below, and liberty and patriotism decide the preponderance.”¹

When the last gun had thundered, there were calls for a vote. It was then near midnight. The galleries were tightly packed with onlookers, while masses of people were wedged into the lobbies, and even invaded the floor itself. Benton, or his friends, pretended to think that he was in danger of his life. The truth is that the Jackson régime had bred such manners among the people that guns and bludgeons were in every-day use. The entire spirit of society, no less than that of the government, had been altered by one extraordinary man who had made

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, pp. 58-59.

himself a kind of monarch over whom was thrown, curiously enough, a mantle of democracy. After the vote was taken and the Jackson men had won by twenty-four ayes to nineteen noes, Benton insisted that the black lines should be drawn around the resolution at once. There were groans and hisses in a portion of the galleries immediately above the head of the senator from Missouri. The chair was about to have them cleared when Benton, in his most dramatic manner, objected. He wished only the guilty to suffer; he pointed to them, he saw them up there. They were the "bank ruffians," "subaltern wretches" he later called them.¹ They could no longer insult the Senate as in other days. They must be seized by the sergeant-at-arms and brought to the bar.

Clay had said that if Jackson were "really the hero" which his friends represented him to be, he would "reject with scorn and contempt, as unworthy of his fame, your black scratches and your baby lines in the fair records of his country." He, however, did nothing of the kind. He invited the "expungers" and their wives to a fine dinner. He met the company, but was too sick to sit at the table with them, his place being taken by Benton, the "head expunger," as the latter not inappropriately describes himself, who was as happy as his chief. "That expurgation," Benton exclaims in his *Thirty Years' View*,² "it was the 'crowning mercy' of his civil—as New Orleans had been of his military—life."³

¹ *Thirty Years' View*, Vol. I, p. 731.

² *Ibid.*

³ Meigs, pp. 239-241.

Clay felt no quickening of his dejected spirits by reason of this act. "I shall hail with the greatest pleasure the occurrence of circumstances which will admit of my resignation without dishonor to myself," he wrote to a friend just after the expunging resolution was passed. "The Senate is no longer a place for a decent man." To Brooke he wrote on February 10, 1837: "You congratulate me on my acceptance of the new appointment recently conferred upon me by the Senate. I think you ought to have condoled and sympathized with me, because by the force of circumstances I was constrained to remain in a body in the humiliated condition in which the Senate now is. I shall escape from it as soon as I decently can, with the same pleasure that one would fly from a charnel house. . . . In the month of March the Cumberland route offers advantages so superior to any other that I must follow it to Kentucky. Would to God it were for the last time!"¹

But there were some compensations. Assurances came to him of the continued love and admiration of those whose opinions were worthy to be prized. Chancellor Kent wrote from New York on February 20, 1837: "My sympathies, and judgment, and confidence, and patriotism, and grief, and indignation are with you in every point, and if I was in Washington, I would go directly up to you, and give your hand the hearty shake of sympathetic feeling. You have vindicated the resolution with irresistible force, and damned the other to everlasting fame."

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 410-411.

CHAPTER X

“TIPPECANOE AND TYLER, TOO”

THE business world had been bearing up in a creditable way under the uncertainty and disturbance created by the unusual financial policies of Jackson, and his eight years ended amid much popular acclamation. There was still some degree of prosperity when Van Buren was inaugurated. Panic, however, lay just ahead. The way had been prepared for sweeping wreck. Whim and ignorance had been supreme in the management of the public finances, and the penalty would fall upon the entire country with swift justice.

Apart from the destruction of the bank, and all the regular agencies of credit which it had established and under which business proceeded safely—in itself sufficient to cause a panic,—there was a surplus distribution scheme of mischievous tendencies. For this Clay could not escape some responsibility, though it could be truthfully said that its enactment at such a time, in such a form, was not of his choice. It was nevertheless one feature of his public land bill to distribute the proceeds of the sales among the states for local uses, an idea not very different from that at the basis of a measure which met the favor of the administration, as well as of the Whigs, and passed Congress in the

session of 1835-1836.¹ It provided that the surplus (reserving \$5,000,000), concerning which there was a great ado, especially since it was to be carried about the country to be placed in favorite banks for the advantage of the dominant political party, should be “deposited” with the several states, according to their representation in Congress. Payment was to be made in four quarterly instalments, beginning on January 1, 1837. The law contemplated a return of the money at the call of Congress, but it was generally understood to be, as it proved, an outright gift.

One powerful motive with Clay and the Whigs, in their support of this plan, was a desire to get the public money out of the hands of the administration. It was, or could be made, they said, a dangerous engine to perpetuate the power of the party in office. The surplus, which had been so much on the minds of those who had opposed Clay’s protective system during the recent discussions of the tariff question, still refused to grow less. It reached a total of more than \$40,000,000 in 1836, and a mixture of considerations, including a curious deference to the state-rights view of the Union, impelled Congress to vote for the distribution scheme.

As the 1st of January, 1837, the time for the first payment, approached, the banks in all parts of the country, which held government deposits, began to look about them for means to meet the call. The money was in the hands of institutions, a number of them essentially weak. The prize of government deposits had led to the establishment of many state

¹ June 23, 1836, *Statutes at Large*, p. 52.

banks which hoped to receive a share of these easy favors. They issued their paper money, lent out their credit, encouraged speculation. Now that the government needed the funds which had led the way to this season of reckless plenty, loans must be called in and further accommodations to borrowers denied. Jackson made the situation no better by a characteristic act of his own, his "specie circular." The sales of land to speculators were largely for the notes of state banks, in some cases of doubtful solvency. He wished Congress to provide that only gold and silver coin should be received at the land-offices, and failing to get such legislation he, in July, 1836, issued an order upon his own responsibility. This measure created a sudden demand for specie for exchanges in which paper money had hitherto been the medium. Coin was drawn from the East to the West, so that it might be paid to the government through the land-offices. The whole financial fabric was under stress and strain, and that it fell could have surprised no student of the political and economic situation.

The first instalment of \$9,367,000, due on January 1, 1837, was successfully transferred from the deposit banks to the states. The second was paid, though not without difficulty, on April 1st. When the time for the third payment arrived, in July, the banks had broken down and business of all kinds, financial and mercantile, suffered general collapse. Fortunes in cotton, tobacco and iron, as well as in Western land, disappeared in a night. Bankruptcy stared all parts of the country in the face, and tens of thousands of wage-workers were

thrown into the streets. There was a general suspension of specie payments, and Van Buren saw that he had come into a legacy which was to be of far less value and honor than he had hoped. Ruin was made the wilder by the uses to which the states applied the money they had received. They at once embarked upon ill-considered schemes of public works and increased the whirl of speculative excitement, which now ended in a general crash.

The business community demanded immediate relief. It asked the President to rescind the specie circular. This he declined to do, but he was compelled to yield to the request for a special session of Congress. It was called for September 4, 1837. So rapid was the decline in the national resources from taxation and the sales of land, that instead of a surplus, the government was now confronted with a deficit. Van Buren's message to Congress, when it convened, was full of clear and direct statements as to the cause of the economic distress. He frankly confessed that the policy of depositing the public money in state banks was a mistake, but instead of turning again to a national bank, which was the resource of Clay and the Whigs, he recommended the independent treasury system. The distribution of the fourth instalment of the surplus of the states, he said, should be withheld, since there was now no surplus and the regular needs of the government must be met by the creation of debt—the issue of treasury notes.

Clay was in his place in the Senate, ready to conduct a vigorous and able opposition. His defense of his policies was brilliant and convincing. The

President had said that the troubles of the country arose from overaction and overtrading. "It would be quite as correct and just, in the instance of a homicide perpetrated by the discharge of a gun," said Mr. Clay, "to allege that the leaden ball, and not the man who leveled the piece, was responsible for the murder. The true inquiry is, How came that excessive overtrading, and those extensive bank facilities which the message describes? Were they not the necessary and immediate consequences of the overthrow of the bank, and the removal from its custody of the public deposits?" The surplus had arisen, he asserted, from the sales of the public lands, not from the tariff, as had been alleged by Mr. Calhoun and those who had taken a position hostile to the protective system. "If the land bill had been allowed to go into operation," he continued, "it would have distributed generally and regularly among the several states the proceeds of the public lands, as they would have been received from time to time. They would have returned back in small streams, similar to those by which they have been collected, animating and improving and fructifying the whole country." There would then have been no surplus; no removal of the deposits; no accumulation in the state banks of great sums of money seeking mischief to do.

Mr. Clay had been appealed to for some "healing measure." He could suggest none but a national bank. "The great want of the country is a general and uniform currency and a point of union, a sentinel, a regulator of the issues of the local banks." The sub-treasury system he conceived to be full of

evils. It was likely to prove insecure. It opened a way to favoritism. It would fearfully increase executive patronage. All, or nearly all, the objections resolved themselves into an expression of distrust of the Jackson party in the administration of this great new power, with ringing allusions to the “perilous union of the purse and the sword,” and an effective appeal to the lessons of English history. In new language, with fresh energy and eloquence, he arraigned the usurpations of Jackson with few expressions of confidence or disavowal or change in Van Buren, who came into office with the intention of following “in the very footsteps of his predecessor.”

Clay had his remedy and it was a national bank. Then why did he not propose it at once? This course on his part he knew would be futile, with Congress constituted as it then was. “I do not desire to force upon the Senate,” he said with dignity, “or upon the country against its will, if I could, my opinion, however sincerely or strongly entertained. If a national bank be established, its stability and its utility will depend upon the general conviction which is felt of its necessity. And until such a conviction is deeply impressed upon the people and clearly manifested by them, it would, in my judgment, be unwise even to propose a bank.” He could perceive “no remedy but such as is in the hands of the people themselves.”

At the special session the sub-treasury bill passed the Senate but it failed in the House. When Congress convened in its regular session in December, the discussion was continued and on February 19,

1838, Clay developed his thesis regarding the independent treasury system. He spoke this time at great length, with deeper earnestness, and obviously with more care. The result was an oration which, if in some ways it seems not to accord with our later experience with the branch treasuries, was profoundly interesting to those who heard it, and may be read with like interest at this day. Despite its long period of service, no competent judge of financial matters can claim perfection for the sub-treasury scheme, and many of its shortcomings were clearly foreseen and stated by Mr. Clay. His main employment, however, was to identify the plan with Andrew Jackson's administration; in this regard the speech is less convincing, and of less value to-day than it would otherwise have been. It is not at all certain that Jackson from the beginning had in view this kind of a "government bank," as Clay persisted in calling a treasury and its branches which should be in charge of all the fiscal operations of the government, earlier entrusted to a semi-independent institution that for forty years had so successfully attended to them in Philadelphia. Clay tried to prove it from the President's messages and did so to his own complete satisfaction. It is rather to be believed that Jackson's antipathy to the Bank of the United States in the first place was accidental; that his pursuit of it was a matter of whim and passion; and that to give him credit for having in view so good or suitable a system as the sub-treasury plan, is an undeserved compliment to his acumen as a public man.

Clay seriously argued, however, at very consider-

able length that Jackson had overthrown the United States Bank in favor of the state banks and was now himself, through his heirs in the business of government, engaged in the work of destroying these temporary objects of his favor, while all the time having in prospect a great central bank which would be under the absolute domination of the President. He opened his address with thanks to God—"that He has prolonged my life, until the present time, to enable me to exert myself in the service of my country against a project far transcending in pernicious tendency any that I have ever had occasion to consider."

Though there will seem to be some exaggeration in this statement, it is thus that Clay girded himself for what became a most powerful and impressive speech. He himself believed it, and this circumstance gave inspiration to his thought, strength to his utterance and conviction to the minds of his auditors. Jackson's "egotism and vanity," said Clay, at one point in the speech, "prompted him to subject everything to his will ; to change, to remold and retouch everything." He had the same sort of ambition which animated Napoleon and induced him "to impress his name upon everything in France."

"When I was in Paris," said Clay with telling effect, "the sculptors were busily engaged chiseling out the famous 'N,' so odious to the Bourbon line, which had been conspicuously carved on the palace of the Tuileries, and on other public edifices and monuments in the proud capital of France. When, Mr. President, shall we see effaced all traces of the

ravages committed by the administration of Andrew Jackson? Society has been uprooted, virtue punished, vice rewarded and talents and intellectual endowments despised; brutality, vulgarism and loco-focoism upheld, cherished and countenanced. Ages will roll around before the moral and political ravages which have been committed will, I fear, cease to be discernible."

He reviewed the history of his personal acquaintance with Jackson and referred to the old "bargain and corruption" cry which arose in 1825. Immediately after he had announced his determination to vote for John Quincy Adams "a rancorous war was commenced against me and all the barking dogs let loose upon me. . . . I gave the vote, which in the contingency that happened I told my colleague [Mr. Crittenden] who sits before me, prior to my departure from Kentucky in November, 1824, and told others that I should give. . . . But I thank my God that I stand here firm and erect, unbent, unbroken, unsubdued, unawed, ready to denounce the mischievous measures of his administration, and ready to denounce this, its legitimate offspring, the most pernicious of them all."

"His administration," Clay continued, the vision unfolding as he proceeded, "consisted of a succession of astounding measures which fell on the public ear like repeated bursts of loud and appalling thunder. Before the reverberations of one peal had ceased another and another came, louder and louder, and more terrifying. Or rather it was like a volcanic mountain, emitting frightful eruptions of burning lava. Before one was cold and crusted;

before the voices of the inhabitants of buried villages and cities were hushed in eternal silence, another more desolating was vomited forth, extending wider and wider the circle of death and destruction."

Though the speech was marked by no little knowledge of financial subjects, it was rendered most notable perhaps by its allusions to Calhoun, who was now drawing off¹ from the alliance which he had formed with the Whigs for the purpose of combating the policies of Andrew Jackson, and which had been more or less faithfully maintained since Clay had arranged the Compromise of 1833. This was the beginning of an oratorical tourney which was destined to attract more attention than any since the Webster-Hayne debates, and it found Clay aggressive and fit. He outstripped Webster. He was the unquestioned leader of the Whig party and Calhoun recognized his position. The South Carolinian was asked in 1832 what were his relative views of Webster and Clay. He said: "Mr. Webster will never be President. He lacks the qualifications of a leader; he has no faith in his own convictions; he can never be the head of a party. Though very superior in intellect to Mr. Clay, he lacks his moral courage and his strong convictions. Hence, Mr. Clay will always be the head of the party and Mr. Webster will follow."²

Calhoun in a public letter had formally taken leave of his old associates, saying that he was not willing to be absorbed by an organization whose

¹ "At this critical moment the senator left us; he left us for the purpose of preventing the success of the common cause."

² Hunt, *Calhoun*, p. 223.

principles were found to be "so opposite to ours and so dangerous to our institutions as well as oppressive to us" ; and on February 15th, in a speech in the Senate, came out emphatically in favor of the sub-treasury bill.

Clay now went after Calhoun with the graceful movements which always characterized him, but unpitifully. He plunged the rapier under the vizor, making his victim reel with anger and pain. The "drawer" of the sub-treasury bill was "the distinguished gentleman in the White House" ; the "endorser" was "the distinguished senator from South Carolina." The speaker continued :

"What the drawer thinks of the endorser, his cautious reserve and stifled enmity prevent us from knowing. But the frankness of the endorser has not left us in the same ignorance with respect to the opinion of the drawer. He has often expressed it upon the floor of the Senate. On an occasion not very distant, denying him any of the nobler qualities of the royal beast of the forest, he attributed to him those which belong to the most crafty, most skulking and one of the meanest of the quadruped tribe."¹

He told how the alliance had been formed between South Carolina and the Whigs "to arrest the progress of corruption ; to rebuke usurpation and to drive the Goths and Vandals from the Capitol." Their object was about to be accomplished when Calhoun deserted them. "He took up his musket, knapsack and shot-pouch, and joined the other party. He went horse, foot and dragoon, and he

¹ "The fox of Kinderhook."

himself composed the whole corps. . . . We did no wrong to the distinguished senator from South Carolina. On the contrary we respected him, confided in his great and acknowledged ability, his uncommon genius, his extensive experience, his supposed patriotism; above all we confided in his stern and inflexible fidelity. Nevertheless, he left us and joined our common opponents, distrusting and distrusted. He left us, as he tells us in his Edgefield letter, because the victory which our common arms were about to achieve was not to inure to him and his party, but exclusively to the benefit of his allies and their cause. I thought that actuated by patriotism, that noblest of human virtues, we had been contending together for our common country, for her violated rights, her threatened liberties, her prostrate constitution. Never did I suppose that personal or party considerations entered into our views. Whether if victory shall ever again be about to perch upon the standard of the spoils party (the denomination which the senator from South Carolina has so often given to his present allies) he will not feel himself constrained by the principles on which he has acted, to leave them, because it may not inure to the benefit of himself and his party, I leave to be adjusted between themselves.”

Continuing, Mr. Clay said that he had found the speech of the senator from South Carolina, delivered four days before, on February 15th, “plausible, ingenious, abstract, metaphysical and generalizing.” It did not appear to him (Clay) “to be adapted to the bosoms and business of human life. It was aerial and not very high up in the air, Mr. Presi-

dent, either." The closing passages were an entreaty to his fellow senators in his most eloquent vein. He pointed to the English experience with a bank, as good for us to-day as it was in 1838 :

"I oppose to these imaginary terrors, the example deducible from English history. There a bank has existed since the year 1694, and neither has the bank got possession of the government, nor the government of the bank. . . . Will the Senate then bring upon itself the odium of passing this bill? I implore it to forbear, forbear, forbear! I appeal to the instructed senators. Is this government made for us, or for the people and the states whose agents we are? . . . I call upon all the senators; let us bury deep and forever the character of the partisan, rise up patriots and statesmen, break the vile chains of party, throw the fragments to the winds, and feel the proud satisfaction that we have made but a small sacrifice to the paramount obligation which we owe to our common country."

Under such charges Calhoun could not rest longer than March 10th, when the way opened for him to reply to Clay. He wrote once to his daughter: "Mr. Clay is very impudent and I expect to have a round with him."¹ It is said that he stood with every muscle distended. His long hair seemed to be on end and his forehead was wet with perspiration. No other sound was heard in the Senate chamber while in shrill tones he poured out the floods of his denunciation.² The style of the discourse was plain and cold compared with Clay's, which was lighted up always by the warm glow

¹ Hunt, pp. 221-222.

² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

of his own temperament. Calhoun found Clay's speech to be “a premeditated and gratuitous attack” and he resented it vigorously.

“The faculties of our minds,” he said, “are the immediate gifts of our Creator for which we are no further responsible than for their proper cultivation, according to our opportunities, and their proper application to control and regulate our actions. . . . The critic must expect to be criticized, and he who points out the faults of others to have his own pointed out. I cannot retort on the senator the charge of being metaphysical. I cannot accuse him of possessing the powers of analysis and generalization, those higher faculties of the mind (called metaphysical by those who do not possess them) which decompose and resolve into their elements the complex masses of ideas that exist in the world of mind, as chemistry does the bodies that surround us in the material world. . . . The absence of these higher qualities of mind is conspicuous throughout the whole course of the senator's public life. To this it may be traced, that he prefers the specious to the solid, and the plausible to the true. To the same cause, combined with an ardent temperament, it is owing that we ever find him mounted on some popular and favorite measure which he whips along, cheered by the shouts of the multitude and never dismounts till he has ridden it down. . . . It is the fault of his mind to seize on a few prominent and striking advantages, and to pursue them eagerly without looking to consequences.”¹

¹ *Works of Calhoun*, Vol. III, pp. 274-275.

These entertaining amenities between Clay and Calhoun gave zest to the debates of the Senate for the next two or three years. Each man in his characteristic way pursued the other relentlessly, Webster now and then interfering in the forensic duel and diverting Calhoun's attention in his own direction. The people followed the contest with delight. The excitement reached its height in the summer of 1839-1840 in the discussion of the plan which Calhoun offered in opposition to Clay's, for dealing with the public lands. He proposed that they be turned over to the states in which they were situated, "a donation," as Clay declared it to be "of upward of one hundred millions of acres of the common property of all the states of this Union to particular states."

A running debate between the two men began on January 3, 1840. Clay made an effort to identify the bill with the administration, and to show that Calhoun, in advancing it, had the support of Van Buren. The South Carolinian said that such an inquiry was an improper one in such a place. "Was it of no importance," Clay asked in reply, "that the distinguished senator had made his bow in court, kissed the hand of the monarch, was taken into favor and agreed henceforth to support his edicts?" This greatly enraged Calhoun who, while they were on the subject of agreements and understandings, said he would allude to that one, now very famous, by which Clay had entered the cabinet of President Adams. Calhoun asserted bluntly that for two years past he had been supporting the leading measures of the Executive, a statement

which Clay welcomed gladly, as he launched into another defense of himself against the “bargain” story of 1825. He recalled to Calhoun’s mind the fact that he also had then favored Adams as against Jackson, and his constituents had approved it from that day to this, and would to eternity. History would ratify and approve it. Clay defied the senator to make anything out of that part of his career if he could. He had been charged with being an advocate of compromise. So he had been, on a notable occasion, and no man should be more grateful for it than the senator from South Carolina. But for that Compromise, Mr. Clay was not at all certain that he would now have the honor to meet the senator face to face in this national Capitol. Mr. Calhoun presented himself as a defender of state rights. The bill under consideration was an attempt to strip and rob seventeen states of this Union of their property, and assign it over to some eight or nine of the states. If this were what the senator called vindicating the rights of the states, Mr. Clay “prayed God to deliver the country from all such rights, and all such advocates.”

How Calhoun would reply every one was curious to know. He chose to turn to the Compromise of 1833 for which he felt no gratitude toward Mr. Clay. The obligation was on the other side. As the senator himself had alluded to the matter, he was bound to explain what might otherwise be left in oblivion. Clay was compelled to compromise in order to save himself. Events had placed him “flat on his back,” and no other way was open to him. The senator was left “in the most hopeless position,” Calhoun

continued, "with no more weight with his former partisans than this sheet of paper" (the speaker raised one from his desk).

When Calhoun had finished, Clay again rose, "sorry to be obliged to prolong the discussion." The senator had said that, "I was flat on my back and that he was my master," exclaimed Mr. Clay amid much excitement, advancing down the aisle directly in front of Calhoun. He pointed his quivering finger at his opponent and repeated in tones in which were concentrated the utmost scorn and defiance, "He, my master!" "He, my master!" he said again in louder tones with his finger still pointed at Calhoun, and retreating backward with an air indicating the greatest abhorrence. "He, my master!" he repeated a third time, raising his voice to a yet higher key, while he continued his backward movement to the very lobby. Then suddenly changing his voice from a trumpet's strength almost to a whisper, which was audible nevertheless in every corner of the Senate chamber, he added, "Sir, I would not own him as a slave."

There was a hush of breathless silence, followed in a moment by a great outburst of applause which nearly caused the chair to expel the spectators from the galleries.¹

Thus the debate proceeded, with perhaps no immediate purpose but to exhibit the brilliant qualities of mind of two senators of the United States and to amuse the country, though it more clearly defined party relations and brought the sectional difference

¹ William Mathews, *Orators and Oratory*; *Congressional Globe*, 1839-1840, pp. 96-97.

one step nearer the end. The sub-treasury bill, which had been the occasion of Calhoun's departure from Clay, and his affiliation with Van Buren, in order to form that slavery-defending Democratic party, which was the South's hope until the Civil War, had not passed at the special session of 1838. The administration continued to press it, however, and at last it became a law, Clay opposing it with all his abilities to the end. He spoke again on the subject at much length and with great care on January 20, 1840, just before the final vote, which was twenty-four to eighteen in the Senate and 124 to 107 in the House. He did not abate anything of his faith in a United States Bank. That, he said, was the remedy, not this great "government bank," as he continued to denominate the independent treasury, with large numbers of employees holding their offices "at the pleasure and mercy of the President."

"There scarcely remains any power in this government," he said in concluding his speech, "but that of the President. He suggests, originates, controls, checks everything. The insatiable spirit of the Stuarts for power and prerogative was brought upon our American throne on the 4th of March, 1829. It came under all the usual false and hypocritical pretenses and disguises of love of the people, desire of reform, and diffidence of power. The Scotch dynasty still continues. We have had Charles the First and now we have Charles the Second. But I again thank God that our deliverance is not distant, and that on the 4th of March, 1841, a great and glorious revolution without blood, and without convulsion will be achieved."

This was Clay's desire as well as his belief, and the party alignments for another presidential contest were forming rapidly. It is not to be denied that he thought and hoped he would this time be the successful candidate. As the year approached, he followed the course of political events in the various states through his friends, sanguinely, though at times also anxiously. Webster too had designs upon the presidency, and he was a leader who in his own section had great strength. General Harrison, the "old hero" of Tippecanoe, had led the poll among the Whig candidates in 1836, and he still seemed to many a very available figure for a popular campaign. On January 28, 1839, Clay wrote to Judge Brooke from the Senate chamber: "The spirits of my friends are again revived, and they think that they see, in various quarters, indications of the final result which their partiality prompts them to desire. I believe myself that the current in my favor, which for the moment appeared to be impeded, will again burst forward with accumulated strength."¹

In the summer of 1839, Mr. Clay made another tour of the Eastern states. Upon his visit to New York, which he approached in the steamer *James Madison*, he was met at the wharf in Greenwich by immense crowds, and placed in an open barouche, preceded by a band of music and followed by carriages containing prominent citizens who had come to escort him into the city. His entire way to the Astor House, a distance of three miles, was lined with people who acclaimed him with great enthu-

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 439.

siasm. Even the housetops were filled with on-lookers ; flags and banners were everywhere ; bands stationed in the street played as he passed ; ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the whole community seemed to unite to honor him. One of his admirers likened it to an “oriental pageant.”¹ Indeed, for a long time now, whenever Clay went about the country, he was the mark of just such demonstrations of popular love ; sometimes logs were rolled upon the railway track at stations which he passed upon his journeys and the crowds refused to remove them until Clay had come out to make a speech. Thus, it would seem, he was not to be blamed for thinking that he would be his party’s natural choice for the nomination.

As for the canvass of 1832, the candidate was to be named in a national convention. The meeting of delegates was to be held in Harrisburg early in December, 1839. Clay’s friends believed that his prospects were of the best, and it was a matter for surprise as well as great chagrin, when they found that arrangements had been made which would result in their complete undoing. A situation unfavorable to Clay seems to have been brought about mainly by the disaffection of Webster’s friends, and the belief of some party managers, principally in New York, that he was a defeated candidate with whom it would be difficult to make a successful fight. As for the first consideration—that bearing upon Webster’s course, when he, foreseeing his own defeat, withdrew from the contest—it should not have been unexpected. “It seems to be one of the

¹ Mallory, Vol. I, p. 184.

weaknesses of great men in the competition for the highest honors," says Mr. Schurz, "to prefer comparatively small men to one another."

In addition to this the Whig party in New York, like the Jackson party in that state, had developed some astute political manipulators. They had an almost modern prescience regarding their own interests. Their point of view was strange to Mr. Clay and his friends who lived among large questions, which bore directly on the public welfare. The chief of these was Thurlow Weed, an editor of Albany, who was now coming forward as a political influence, and who from this time on led a tolerably triumphant career as a wire-puller, until under the banner of William H. Seward he met the Lincoln men at Chicago in 1860. Clay had learned something of the attitude of Weed at Saratoga Springs, while on his New York visit, during the summer. Thither the leader went with the purpose, if possible, of inducing Clay to withdraw from the contest. He had two ends in view, he himself says—to save Clay, to whom he was "warmly attached," the mortification of defeat, and to prepare the way for the victory of the Whig party, which now had an opportunity to achieve its first national success. The conversations continued off and on for two days, Mr. Clay's bearing being always courteous and kind. He said that he could not "in view of the earnest wishes of troops of his friends throughout the Union refuse them the use of his name," but he would "cheerfully and heartily acquiesce" in the decision of the convention, whatever it might be.¹

¹ Weed, *Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 481.

The canvass developed “great zeal and unanimity” in favor of Mr. Clay in New York City and the river counties, but in other portions of the state a sentiment existed favorable to General Harrison and General Scott, the latter being introduced into the situation for no other purpose than to effect the object in view,—the defeat of the candidate who was in reality the choice of a vast majority of the Whigs of the state. Scott’s nomination seen to be impossible, the delegates would be turned over to Harrison. Public opinion was subjected to a great amount of manipulation,¹ and when the New Yorkers were in place, there were twenty for Scott, ten for Clay and two for Harrison. Weed very frankly tells of his next step, which was to open negotiations with some of the Webster men, with whom he formed an agreement. Although Clay was seen to have a “decided plurality” in the convention, Weed, ostensibly acting on the theory that Clay could not carry New York and Pennsylvania, succeeded in nominating another candidate.

Clay foresaw the result. He wrote to General Combs on December 3d, just before the convention met. He had understood, he said, that eight or nine-tenths of the Whigs of New York preferred him to other candidates, yet a nomination was to be made in conformity to the wishes of one or two-tenths. He desired to know whether it was not easier to bring over one or two-tenths to eight or nine-tenths than to do the opposite thing.² Neither

¹ Schurz. Vol. II, p. 177.

² *Private Correspondence*, p. 142.

Harrison nor Scott¹ seems to have thought himself a suitable candidate for the presidency, especially as a rival to Clay, but they were all pawns in the hands of a few men who had lately entered the political arena in America, to change the course of history from that which it would have taken, if left free to move along the natural lines it had followed before Jackson's corrupting advent into our public life.

Even yet Weed and his friends were not suffi-

¹ A letter in possession of Mrs. Thomas H. Clay of Lexington, Ky., written by General Scott to Henry Clay from Utica, N. Y., on February 5, 1839, says: ". . . Having recently passed rapidly through many of the states (on public duty) I have been approached by persons, of more or less consideration, almost everywhere, who have tendered me assurances of eventual support for the office of President at the next election. Those assurances have come from the friends of yourself, of General Harrison, Mr. Webster and Mr. Van Buren, respectively. In almost every case it was evident that the individual had some doubt of the success of his own favorite candidate, and only looked to me as his second choice. I made one general reply to all and each,—'that I was no politician and could not claim the high distinction of being a statesman; that I was absolutely indifferent whether I ever reached the office of President; that I made no pretensions to it, and that there were already presidential candidates enough before the public without the addition of my name.' To the Whigs, I made the further declaration,—'that it ought not to be doubted that the convention they were to hold would reduce the number of their candidates to one—whom all would cordially support,' and to the supporters of Mr. Van Buren, I further said,—'that, in my bosom, I had had the misfortune to condemn almost every leading measure of the late and present administrations, and at least seven in every ten appointments which the two had made.'

"Being more strongly urged by some leading Whigs than by the many alluded to above, and who seemed to think that the final battle would be fought the next year, I replied, 'You ought not to despair of success with the one candidate who may be duly nominated by the convention;—should he, however, be defeated, I admit that your case will then become rather desperate; it will still be your duty to renew the contest and should you then want a leader of the forlorn hope, and a better

ciently certain of the result to allow the convention to go its own way. A resolution was introduced and passed, authorizing each state delegation to appoint a committee of three to “receive the views and opinions of that delegation, and communicate the same to the assembled committees of all the delegations.” Each delegation should for itself ballot for a presidential candidate and report the result back to the general committee through its committee of three. This scheme worked admirably. There was no opportunity for Clay’s friends to nominate him in open meeting, and to carry him through by storm. Nevertheless, on the first ballot Clay received 102 votes, as against ninety-one for Harrison and fifty-seven for Scott. The latter was eliminated at the right time, in accordance with the plan of the managers, and on the final ballot there were 148 votes for Harrison, ninety for Clay and sixteen for Scott.

be not disclosed in time, you may reckon upon me for that service—with a possibility of success—upon the principle (the nation having been made rabid by one military chieftain) that “the hair of the dog is good for the bite.” This may look like a present argument in favor of my friend General Harrison who, no doubt, and perhaps with good reason, thinks himself superior to me in general soldiership and in conflicts of the field, as he is as a politician and statesman; but in quoting the adage I was thinking of his being probably excluded from the next contest by the intervening convention, and of the fact that when out in the last he was not accepted—which perhaps is a conclusive argument against any quack remedy. Be all this as it may, you have in this, and the enclosed letter [to the Secretary of War] ‘the head and front of my offending,’ or intermeddling, in politics, and I shall continue to observe the same course in the singleness of sincerity. . . . In the meantime, as always, I remain, my dear sir, with the highest respect and esteem,

“Very truly yours,

“WINFIELD SCOTT.”

It is not to be wondered at that the "disappointment and vexation" of Clay's friends found "excited expression."¹ The opposition had reason to fear that it had gone much too far. It delayed the final ballot twenty-four hours in order to effect a reconciliation, and while the nomination was made unanimous, the motion could be offered and supported with little grace. It was clear enough now that nothing would do except to nominate a candidate for Vice-President, drawn from Clay's immediate circle of friends. But none who was suitable could be found. B. Watkins Leigh, of Virginia, rose and declined. John M. Clayton, of Delaware, refused the honor through his friend Reverdy Johnson. Finally ex-Governor John Tyler, of Virginia, who had voted for Clay in the convention and had at former times expressed admiration for the great Kentuckian and his policies, was named, and he accepted. Nevertheless, the ticket was not put forward without many misgivings, and it remained for Clay himself to give to it, in a spirit of true magnanimity, that position in the sight of the Whigs of the country, which led to a sweeping victory after one of the hardest fought popular contests in the history of the presidency in America.

As in 1831-1832 the work of the nominating convention was ratified a few months afterward by a national convention of "young men." This met in Baltimore, May 4, 1840. Clay addressed on the occasion an audience of more than 20,000, and it was a meeting in which enthusiasm was unconfined. He spoke of the convention at Harrisburg. It was com-

¹ Weed, Vol. I, p. 482.

posed he said of “as enlightened and as respectable a body of men as were ever assembled” in this country. “General Harrison was nominated, and cheerfully and without a moment’s hesitation, I gave my hearty concurrence in that nomination. From that moment to the present I have had but one wish, one object, one desire, and that is to secure the election of the distinguished citizen who received the suffrages of the convention.” He believed that there were twenty states which would give their votes to Harrison, a prediction that did not fall far short of a triumphant realization.

Clay entered the campaign with energy, speaking at many places. The enthusiasm seemed to well up spontaneously all over the country, and was without previous, and perhaps later example. Log cabins with the “latch-string” hanging out, ‘coons and hard cider—all indicative of Harrison’s beginnings on the frontier—everywhere appeared to swell the excitement. Glee clubs were organized to sing campaign songs; companies of men and boys marched up and down the country shouting “Tippecanoe and Tyler, too.” The “old hero” of New Orleans was not a circumstance to the “old hero” of an Indian war whom the Whigs had now groomed and brought out upon parade twenty-nine years after the event.

One of Clay’s most notable speeches was that delivered at a Harrison meeting in Nashville on August 17th, within arm’s length of Jackson in the “Hermitage.” Thousands of men and women attended to listen. The audience seemed as great as that in Baltimore and the marching men, the sing-

ing, the shouting, the gay banners, the waving handkerchiefs made him think, as Clay had elsewhere said, that the nation was somehow "agitated upon its whole surface and at its lowest depths like the ocean when convulsed by a terrible storm." He came, he explained, to bring no hard words for General Jackson, their fellow citizen and friend. He was a "great chieftain; he had fought bravely and well for his country." The speaker hoped that "he would live long and enjoy much happiness, and when he departed from this fleeting vale of tears, that he would enter into the abode of the just made perfect."

Mr. Clay reached his climax when he spoke of his old friend, Felix Grundy, who from being a very eminent criminal lawyer had advanced to the United States Senate. In 1838 he had become Van Buren's Attorney-General, and was now engaged in trying to accomplish the reelection of his chief who had been renominated by the Democrats. "One of the pleasures which I promised myself in making this visit to your beautiful town," said Clay, "was to meet and talk over matters with him, but on my inquiry for him I learned that he was in East Tennessee making speeches in favor of the present administration. 'Ah!' said I, 'at his old occupation, —defending criminals!'"

This was an immensely successful sally for a political meeting. Those who were present say that the manner in which Clay made it "surpasses description." His gestures and the style of his speaking, combined to produce a great effect. When the commotion subsided, he continued happily, "But

there is this difference between my distinguished friend's present and past defense of criminals. He is now defending great criminals of state not before a carefully packed jury, but before the free, enlightened, virtuous and patriotic people ; and therefore we may well hope that his present defense will not be attended with his hitherto unusual success.”¹

The campaign was one long frolic which could have but one result. Van Buren had fallen upon evil days. He was reaping the whirlwind after Jackson had sowed the wind. Some renewal of confidence had occurred in the business of the country since the panic of 1837, but banks began to fail again, and with ruin in every one's mind the party in power could easily be swept out of place. It could be said in truth of Harrison that he had no known opinions upon most of the great issues which Clay and Webster had set up for the Whig party, but this was probably to his advantage. It was in any event an opposition party year, and it was an opportunity lost to Clay, to the organization which he had created, and to the country which so sorely needed to be recalled to the sound principles of its earlier years when he was cheated out of his portion at Harrisburg. After all the states had been heard from, there were found to be 234 electoral votes from nineteen states for Harrison, and only sixty from seven states (New Hampshire, Virginia, South Carolina, Illinois, Alabama, Missouri and Arkansas) for Van Buren.

Never had the Whig outlook been so propitious or the party hope of immediate achievement so

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 217.

great. The more, then, were the disappointment and chagrin when events conspired to prevent the reaping of any worthy harvest. Clay pressed the cause boldly in the last session of Congress of Van Buren's administration, beginning in December, 1840, and ending March, 1841. He led a movement to repeal the sub-treasury law, though he knew it could not succeed until the results of the election should be seen in a new Congress. He was, however, a born parliamentarian; he was made to shine in a legislative chamber; it was his delight to call out an antagonist in debate and put him in the attitude of defense before the assembled multitude. The main point of his argument was that the country had decreed the repeal of the measure at the recent elections. "Gentlemen on the other side" had said that the people had decided this or that, especially in regard to a Bank of the United States, and he wished them now to note the message of the nation on the subject of the sub-treasury scheme. He was taunted with being the leader of "a coon-skin, log-cabin party." Before going further, he would like to ask those who used these words in so much contempt, what kind of a party theirs must be "to be driven out of power by a party whose residence is a log cabin and whose covering is coon-skins"? There was something wrong about it or the defeated party would never have met so hard a fate.¹

Late in January he made another elaborate speech upon his land bill. He maintained throughout the session a triumphant air, which had better been a

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 22 *et seq.*

little subdued, especially in view of what was so soon to follow. But that was the nature of the man. It gave him joy to taunt the administration party which had been so decisively overthrown. He had the spirits of a schoolboy whose team had just vanquished an opponent on some athletic field. The merits of his scheme for the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of public lands were again stated in a discourse which extended over two days, amid interpolations by other members, rejoinders, laughter on the floor and in the galleries, and some of the horse-play borrowed from the stump from which all the senators had so recently come back.

One passage at least deserves to be remembered, however, though later events prove how much overdrawn the prophecy was by the orator's hopeful imagination. The measure he believed would greatly tend to the perpetuity of the Union. “No section, no state,” he exclaimed, “would ever be mad enough to break off from the Union and deprive itself of the inestimable advantages which it secures. Although thirty or forty more new states should be admitted into this Union, this measure would cement them all fast together.” An honorable senator wished to witness a settlement at the mouth of the Oregon, “and he will probably be gratified at no distant day. Then will be seen members of Congress from the Pacific states scaling the Rocky Mountains, passing through the country of the grizzly bear, descending the turbid Missouri, entering the father of rivers, ascending the beautiful Ohio and coming to this Capitol to take their seats in its spacious and magnificent halls. Proud of the

commission they bear, and happy to find themselves here in council with friends and brother countrymen, enjoying the incalculable benefits of this great confederacy and, among them, their annual distributive share of the issues of a nation's inheritance, would even they, the remote people of the Pacific, ever desire to separate themselves from such a high and glorious destiny ? ” ¹

Clay, not unnaturally, had the expectation of being the principal power behind the new President. He had been speaking as the party chief and this he was by common consent the country over. He was invited to become Secretary of State in the cabinet of General Harrison who visited “ Ashland ” on his way East ; but he chose to remain in the Senate as a field for greater service to the administration. Webster, who had been reserved for the Treasury Department, was then asked to take the post. The cabinet was made up largely of Clay's warm and devoted friends, though Harrison seemed early to fall under the influence of the petty politicians who had dominated the Harrisburg convention. They sought to have the new President believe that Clay was endeavoring to override him in appointments to office, and the development of national policies, a charge which deeply wounded the great Kentuckian. Herds of office-hunters poured into Washington. Jackson had not only corrupted his own party ; he had also taken the virtue out of the other, and in the hour of victory there was a large demand for the spoils. With this unseemly exhibition Clay could consistently have nothing to do.

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 270.

He held aloof from it all with no wish in the triumph but to cause to prevail the measures which he had made his and his party's during the twelve years past. He said in a speech in his own “slashes of Hanover” while the campaign was in progress: “If we acted on the avowed and acknowledged principle of our opponents ‘that the spoils belong to the victors,’ we should indeed be unworthy of the support of the people. No! fellow citizens; higher, nobler, more patriotic motives actuate the Whig party. Their object is the restoration of the Constitution, the preservation of liberty and rescue of the country.”¹

It was a cause of disappointment, if not of anger, to Clay to be told by an entirely mediocre man, who by mere chance had come to the President's chair, as an exponent of what were his own principles and policies, that his advice bore the appearance of interference. “If to express freely my opinion as a citizen and as a senator in regard to public matters be dictation,” he wrote to Harrison on March 15, 1841, before leaving for “Ashland,” “then I have dictated and not otherwise. There is but one alternative which I could embrace, to prevent the exercise of this common right of freedom of opinion, and that is retirement to private life. That I am most desirous of, and if I do not promptly indulge the feeling, it is because I entertain the hope—perhaps vain hope—that by remaining a little longer in the Senate, I may possibly render some service to the country to whose interests my life has been dedicated.”²

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 207. ² *Private Correspondence*, p. 453.

When Clay returned to the capital for the special session of Congress, which had been called to begin a Whig administration of the government on May 31, 1841, General Harrison was gone. He had lived only a month, and John Tyler was established in the President's office, a firmer, stronger man, but a more mischievous one from every Whig point of view than Harrison ever could have been. Clay had reached the age of sixty-four and his health was not of the best. He alluded in his speeches to his years, and was likely to make complaint of tire and exhaustion before he came to the end of a discourse. While Tyler was not one of his trusted friends, he was supposed to be an entirely sympathetic disciple. In 1825 he had written a letter, which was remembered, approving of Clay's vote for John Quincy Adams. "Instead of seeing in your course on the late presidential question aught morally or politically wrong," he said, "I am on the contrary fully impressed with the belief that the United States owes you a deep debt of gratitude for that course."¹

It is true that he was a strict constructionist of the Jeffersonian and Madisonian school, and in the Senate he had put himself in an attitude of opposition to internal improvements, the protective system and the national bank. Since that time, however, he had given up his seat rather than obey the resolutions of the Virginia legislature, instructing him to vote to place Benton's black lines around the record of censure against Jackson. He thus came to be regarded as a kind of martyr, worthy of reward at the hands of the Whig party. He had

¹*Private Correspondence*, pp. 119-120.

wept at Harrisburg, it is said, when Clay was not nominated, a test of fealty which seemed to augur well for his future course, as a Vice-President at least. As has been too often the case in American history, however, no thought was given to the emergency in which he might come to be President, else one of those half-dozen men who had so indignantly rejected the proposal at Harrisburg might have consented to join his name with “Old Tippecanoe’s” for the great contest.

Tyler entered his office with the determination to be a President in deed as well as in name. His first utterances indicated an intention to recommend and support the leading Whig policies only in a qualified way, but Clay believed that if he led, the President would follow. He therefore took command in the Senate in that imperial style which was characteristic of his nature, and fitted him as it did few others who ever assumed to speak in a tone of like authority. The Whigs came out of the election of 1840 with a majority of seven in the Senate and of nearly fifty in the popular branch of Congress. Clay is said to have declared to a friend: “Tyler dares not resist me, I will drive him before me.” He announced in a resolution at the opening of the extra session what would constitute the policies of his party. They included the repeal of the sub-treasury law which had so lately gone into effect, the incorporation of a national bank, his bill distributing the proceeds of land sales to the various states, and higher tariff duties,—all financial measures destined to fall within the field of the Committee on Finance, of which he was the chairman.

Since Clay had pronounced, and firmly believed the sub-treasury bill to be an entirely pernicious and dangerous measure, he first arranged for its repeal. Tyler approved, and the way was clear for the great Whig remedy, a national bank. Secretary of the Treasury Ewing, a warm friend of Clay, cordially recommended the establishment of such a fiscal agency in Washington. Clay reported a bill from his committee in the Senate, and it passed both houses of Congress with the party influences behind it, being sent at once to the President. Then the thunder crashed and the storm descended. There was nothing in Tyler's past course of life to warrant any one in feeling confident that he would sign the bill. There were rumors in plenty that he would veto it and already on July 4, 1841, Clay wrote to Brooke: "Mr. Tyler's opinions about a bank are giving us great trouble. Indeed they threaten not only a defeat on that measure, but endanger the permanency and the ascendancy of the Whig cause." Nevertheless, it was scarcely conceivable that in view of the sweeping triumph, in 1840, of Whig principles, of which the bank seemed to be the chief, and the unusual and wholly accidental manner in which Tyler came into the presidency, that he would defy Clay and the vote of the party in Congress on this subject. It was precisely that which he did on August 16th.

The elation of the Democrats was as great as the anger of the Whigs, who gathered in front of the White House to denounce him as a "traitor," a name which followed him over the country. He was generally hanged and burned in effigy, as soon

as the magnitude of the act was understood, and it was the beginning of a rupture between the President and his party which rapidly tended to become absolute.

On the 19th of August Clay made his reply to the veto message. It was extremely temperate in tone under all the circumstances and for that reason conveyed rebuke more stinging than if it had been delivered in a thunderous style. It was an appeal to reason rather than to passion. There were allusions to the speaker's long and intimate friendship with the President, which he wished not to see brought to an end. He expressed the desire that no party defection or schism should arise to interfere with the execution of the strong commands of the nation of the year before. Yet he yielded nothing. His was the tone of the leader, and it rang through the country, serving to delay judgment against Tyler until the people should have further evidence of his temper. Clay wished no one to despair because of disappointment in one measure. More remained to be done. It was not the time to adjourn and “go home in disgust.” “Let us do all,” he enjoined, “let us do everything we can for the public good.”

His sober attitude did not serve to save him from the attack of the President's defenders, who included Senator Rives, of Virginia. It was in a rejoinder to Rives that Clay framed a famous phrase. The President, he intimated, was surrounded by privy councilors, by men engineering a cabal, “a new sort of kitchen cabinet,” whose object was to alienate Mr. Tyler from his old friends. They were beating about for recruits and “endeavoring

to form a third party with materials so scanty as to be wholly insufficient to compose a decent corporal's guard." The words were immediately caught up everywhere and were used against Tyler and the second-rate men who moved around him until the end of his term.

The attention of Congress was now diverted to the land bill advocated by Clay at so many sessions, thus far in vain, except as to the hurtful feature of it which caused a distribution of the surplus among the several states. It was now mutilated before it could be enacted, since an amendment, in the spirit of the Compromise of 1833, provided that, whenever the needs of the Treasury should exceed the twenty per cent. horizontal rate, fixed in that year, the distribution to the states should be suspended.

Meanwhile Webster, and other intermediaries between the President and Congress, endeavored to outline a plan for a bank which would meet with Executive favor. As even the name seemed to have a hateful suggestion, it was to be called a "Fiscal Corporation." The measure passed the House and went to the Senate, which duly approved it on September 3d, but on the 9th it, too, was vetoed. The President had changed his mind after conferring, if accounts are not at fault, with the "corporal's guard." This was bitterness that no language could quite compass and the Whig leaders at Washington, taking counsel with Clay, resolved upon action which would result in reading Tyler out of the party.

The special session of Congress was to adjourn on

September 13th. After the second bank veto, the members of the cabinet were invited to meet with Clay to discuss the subject, though Webster, who would have been a powerful addition, did not attend. He had been unwilling for some time to follow whithersoever Clay led, and he had in hand important negotiations with England concerning the Northwestern boundary, which finally resulted in the Ashburton Treaty. There were patriotic, as well as personal considerations, which led him to seek no estrangement with the President at such a time. It was agreed at the meeting that the members of the cabinet should, one after another, resign on September 11th. As they would each and all be dismissed anyhow, they would go together, thus creating a great public impression which could not fail to redound to the party advantage.

Tyler found himself, according to the programme, without a minister, except Webster, whom he seemed greatly to prize. With such support he declared Clay to be a “doomed man.” He thought that they would soon create a new Whig party. Webster would bring him New England and they would win other states; but he reckoned badly. He did not know the great power which Clay wielded over the party. Webster’s course was questioned when it was not openly disapproved, even in his own state, and the date when he too must retire from such unusual company was delayed but a little while. Indignation, lately without example, was directed against Tyler in Whig newspapers, in public meetings called especially to denounce him, in every variety of medium for the expression of

public opinion. The state elections in the autumn of 1841 were coming on, and in many parts of the country there was almost as much excitement as in the memorable preceding year.

From the Whig point of view, however, they were not so happy in their results as might have been hoped. On October 28th, Clay at "Ashland" wrote to Brooke: "The issue of the elections this fall, however much to be regretted, perhaps ought not to surprise us. An army which believed itself betrayed by its commander-in-chief will never fight well under him or while he remains in authority." Though the results were in some ways disappointing, the party was aroused from centre to rim by Tyler's apostasy, as the Whigs generally considered it. The Democrats, while they exulted in his course, gave him no sincere respect, and his term of office proceeded almost friendlessly. Clay's reward was the knowledge that he had the faith and love of his party. He was now its unquestioned leader, and was determined to execute the resolve which he had several times taken to retire from the Senate. He would soon conclude eleven years of continuous service in that body. On January 27th he wrote Brooke, from Washington, as follows:

"As we advance in years, our labors ought to lighten. With the view to lessen mine, and in contemplation of the unhappy and disturbed state of our public councils, arising out of the course of Mr. Tyler, I mean to resign my seat in the Senate during this session. I want rest and my private affairs want attention. Nevertheless I would make any personal sacrifice, if, by remaining here, I could do

any good, but my belief is I can effect nothing, and perhaps my absence may remove an obstacle to something being done by others. I shall therefore go home in the spring.”¹

This view of the situation was entirely sound. It was a prospect very different from that which he had beheld a year before when the party entered office with so much hope of great achievement.

Another financial question engaged Mr. Clay's attention in March, 1842. As the time drew near for the reduction of the tariff to the horizontal rate of twenty per cent., where under the terms of the Compromise of 1833 it would stand after June 30, 1842, he, as one of the parties to that agreement, as well as the Whig leader, felt that he had a duty to perform. Even before the day of reduction, the revenues were inadequate, counting in the proceeds of the land sales which he still wished to distribute to the states. Calhoun, on his side, attributed the financial distress of the country, now prolonged for several years, to the tariff, a theory which Clay combated vigorously. He declared again that it was his purpose as long as he remained in the Senate to see that “the original principles of the act [of 1833] should be carried out faithfully and honestly.”² It was a task of some embarrassment now to state that duties greater than twenty per cent., toward which, for the conciliation of South Carolina, they had all the while been tending, were necessary even before that ideal had been reached. He very truly said, however, that there was no such limitation in

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 456.

² Speech in Senate, February 18, 1842.

the act; the impression that the tariff was not to exceed the horizontal rate of twenty per cent. after 1842 was entirely erroneous. This was not one of the principles of the Compromise, and it had been distinctly stated in 1833 that the duties thereafter should be what the needs and exigencies of the nation might require. After carefully reviewing the financial situation of the government, he found that \$26,000,000 were needed annually from customs, and that with importation running at the present rate, an *ad valorem* duty of thirty per cent. was imperatively demanded.

His speeches at this session were couched in moderate and conciliatory language. They seemed to be the laying down of programmes for his followers by a departing leader, who wished to go in the spirit of peace. His place was to be taken by his friend, John J. Crittenden, who had entered the Senate as his colleague from Kentucky, in 1835, and resigned in 1841 only to enter Harrison's cabinet, which he had left at the time of the explosion in the preceding September. On March 31st Clay delivered his farewell address. It was one of the most notable events in the history of the United States Senate. The act was performed with all the dramatic accompaniments and settings which characterized his life as a great popular leader. The chamber was crowded by men and women who bent forward to hear the stately sentences which were for the last time, as it was believed, to flow in that place from the silver tongue of their beloved orator. The people "seemed to be literally piled one upon another." Not only was every seat taken, but the railings also

were occupied, while every avenue leading to the chamber was choked with humanity. Two hours before the speech began exit and entrance were equally impossible.

There was no disappointment. It was a solemn scene. Clay rose to offer “the last motion I shall ever make in this body”—the presentation of the credentials of his successor. He opened with a tribute to the Senate, which he said could, “without arrogance or presumption, stand an advantageous comparison with any deliberative body that ever existed in ancient or modern times.” He had been in the public service almost continuously since 1806. It was not for him to say what had been his success. “History, if she deign to notice me, and posterity, if the recollection of my humble actions shall be transmitted to posterity, are the best, the truest and the most impartial judges. When death has closed the scene, then sentence will be pronounced and to that I commit myself.”

He spoke of his enemies without bitterness, and of his friends, to whom his heart went out in “never-ceasing gratitude.” His feelings, when alluding to them, overcame him, and he proceeded with “deep sensibility and difficult utterance.” He paid his tribute to Kentucky; he repelled the charge that he was a “dictator.” He owned that his nature was warm, his temper ardent and his disposition, especially in relation to the public service, enthusiastic, and he made his apologies to any of his brother senators whom he may have offended, perhaps, by word or tone of speech in the course of debate. He would go without carrying with him “a

single feeling of resentment or dissatisfaction to the Senate, or any one of its members." Such sentiments should be consigned to oblivion. His wish was that the recollections of all "shall dwell in future only on those conflicts of mind with mind, those intellectual struggles, those noble exhibitions of the powers of logic, argument and eloquence honorable to the Senate and to the nation, in which each has sought and contended for what he deemed the best mode of accomplishing one common object, the interest and the most happiness of our beloved country." He prayed "the most precious blessings of Heaven" to rest upon "the whole Senate, and each member of it," and bade them all "a long, a lasting, and a friendly farewell."

Thereupon Mr. Crittenden took the oath of office and William C. Preston of South Carolina, Calhoun's colleague though a Whig and a friend of Clay, rose to say that what had just occurred was an epoch in the history of the Senate, and he would move an adjournment, which was unanimously agreed to. The members pressed around the orator. Calhoun shook hands with him for the first time in many years. For a minute or two neither man was able to speak. Finally as they parted Clay said, "Give my best regards to Mrs. Calhoun." Sober old senators as well as ladies in the galleries were in tears while Clay spoke, and impressive as is the oration upon a reading at this day, one who heard it has declared that the printed words convey only the most meagre suggestion of its power and beauty. Crittenden wrote to a friend that "Clay's leaving Congress was something like the soul's quitting the

body.”¹ “It was the first occasion of the kind,” said Benton in describing the scene a few years later, “and thus far has been the last.” He added sagely that “it might not be recommendable for any one except another Henry Clay—if another should ever appear,—to attempt the imitation.”

¹ *Life of Crittenden*, Vol. I, p. 177.

CHAPTER XI

SLAVERY AND ANTI-SLAVERY

BEYOND all doubt Henry Clay hated slavery, though he owned negroes as did most men of his wealth and position in Kentucky. He had as body-servants one or two slaves who were his almost inseparable companions. One of these, Aaron Dupuy, accompanied him to Washington in the early years of his public career, and also went abroad with him when he was commissioner in 1814-1815 at Ghent. Aaron's wife, Mammy Lottie, nursed all of Mr. Clay's children and many of his grandchildren, and when Aaron became too old for the service, his place as valet was taken by his son Charles, of whom Mr. Clay spoke as "my faithful servant and friend Charles."

He was not oblivious to the evils of slavery—no thoughtful, humane man could be—but he had been closely associated with this system of labor, and it did not bear upon him as the intolerable yoke which it seemed to increasing numbers of persons at the North, in large part drawn from his own political party. While in early life he had expressed his abhorrence of the institution, as had most of the Virginia "fathers" out of whose school he sprang, he had spoken quite clearly on the slaveholders' side while the question of the Missouri Compromise was under discussion.

He was always a consistent advocate of the

colonization of the negroes in Liberia, or elsewhere, but this policy was recommended with the desire of ridding the country of the free negro rather than the slave, and was therefore a sectional measure designed principally to favor the South.

In 1830 while William Lloyd Garrison was in prison in Baltimore, the young and enthusiastic anti-slavery poet, John G. Whittier, wrote to Henry Clay, asking him to intervene in behalf of the Abolitionist. Clay communicated with his friend Niles, and probably would have paid the fine to obtain Garrison's release if measures to secure this end had not been earlier taken by other men.¹ This was of course before Abolition became the sectional firebrand which it was soon to be. Mr. Clay wasted little sympathy upon Mr. Garrison in later years.

¹ Referred to in *William Lloyd Garrison*, by his children, Vol. I, pp. 189-190. In 1879 Whittier wrote from Amesbury to Thomas H. Clay, grandson of Henry Clay: "When W. L. Garrison was imprisoned in Baltimore, he wrote me a letter from his prison. I was anxious to do something for him. I had no knowledge of any person of influence in Baltimore and it occurred to me that Henry Clay, whom I greatly admired, might possibly exert an influence in his favor. I wrote him stating the case, and mentioned the fact that Garrison had been the first, or nearly the first, to nominate him for the presidency in New England. After some delay, I received a letter from thy honored grandfather, saying that from my representation, and from his own knowledge of Garrison, he had communicated with a friend in Baltimore (I think he mentioned Mr. Niles of the *Register*) asking him to inquire into the matter, and render on his account what aid he could to Mr. Garrison; but he had just learned that he had been anticipated by a New York merchant [Arthur Tappan] who had paid the fine and set him at liberty. . . . I have always regarded it as a very noble act on thy grandfather's part, characteristic of his noble and generous nature. Would to Heaven there could be found in all the South at this time one like him."

The truth is that his utterances covered both sides of the question, though there is not the least reason to doubt that he sincerely and earnestly desired the emancipation of the negroes and would have contributed in any way, which seemed to him feasible and right, to the bringing about of this object.

Mr. Clay was one of the founders of the American Colonization Society, which was formed to return free people of color to Africa, and in 1836, upon the death of James Madison, he became its president. The speech delivered before it in the hall of the House of Representatives on January 20, 1827, to which reference has been made, was not anything like an Abolition document. He clearly said that the general government had no constitutional power to emancipate the slaves. It was a matter for the states, and "the states only which tolerate slavery." Yet he had visions of the extinction of the evil. They who reproached the society for its exertions were in a difficult position. "If they would repress all tendencies toward liberty and ultimate emancipation, they must do more than put down the benevolent efforts of this society. They must go back to the era of our liberty and independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunder its annual joyous return. . . . They must blow out the moral lights around us, and extinguish that greatest torch of all which America presents to a benighted world, pointing the way to their rights, their liberties, and their happiness. And when they have achieved all these purposes their work will yet be incomplete. They must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate the light of reason, and the love of liberty. Then, and

not till then, when universal darkness and despair prevail, can you perpetuate slavery, and repress all sympathies, and all humane and benevolent efforts among freemen, in behalf of the unhappy portion of our race doomed to bondage.”¹

In his speech before the Kentucky Colonization Society at Frankfort on December 17, 1829, he asked earnestly, “Is there no remedy? Must we endure perpetually all the undoubted mischiefs of a state of slavery, as it affects both the free and bond portions of these states?”

And on March 28, 1832, in a speech in the United States Senate, Mr. Clay expressed the hope that “at some day or other, however distant, and in some mode, the country would be rid of this, the darkest spot on its mantle.”

The conviction that the general government had no authority over slavery, and that it could be regulated only by state action in those states which tolerated it, was reaffirmed in the Senate in a speech on the public lands on June 20, 1832.² It became, in a sense, the platform upon which Mr. Clay stood until the development of events called for a fuller statement of his principles.

Congress was now beginning to receive petitions praying its members to take various kinds of drastic action upon the slavery question. Their number rapidly increased and the mere presentation of them angered the Southerners so greatly that they made arrangements to forbid it in the House, and if possible would have done so in the Senate. Against any violation of the right of petition, Clay protested

¹ Colton, Vol. V, p. 339.

² *Ibid.*, p. 514.

vigorously in 1836. It had been his habit to bring in those petitions which were sent to him. He wished that "another organ" had been chosen but, when they were committed to his care, it was, he conceived, his duty to present them. This duty was "of a constitutional, almost a sacred character."¹ He did approve, though reluctantly, of James Buchanan's proposal, that when they were received it should be without debate.

In a similar way Clay opposed Calhoun's plan to prohibit the circulation through the post-offices in the slave states of Abolition tracts and other argumentative material, on the ground that they were "incendiary." Jackson in his message to Congress in December, 1835, had urged the passage of such a law. Clay saw only danger to the liberties of the people in this course. He was opposed to it "from the first to the last," and he hoped that a time would never come "when the general government should undertake to correct the evil by such remedies."

In December, 1837, when petitions were being received on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia, amid continued Southern protests, Clay exclaimed: "It has been said that this is not a case for argument. Not a case for argument! What is it that lies at the bottom of all our free institutions? Argument, inquiry, reasoning, consideration, deliberation. What question is there in human affairs so weak or so strong that it cannot be approached by argument and reason?"

On December 27, 1837, Calhoun in order to bring

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 36.

the question to an issue and ascertain where the senators stood, presented a series of resolutions, six in number, which were a declaration of the extreme state-rights view of slavery. They led to a fuller discussion of the subject than had yet been given to it in the United States Senate. It proceeded for many days, Calhoun leading in a bitter dictatorial spirit, all the while hinting of, when he did not directly allude to, the dissolution of the Federal bond.

"We allow ourselves to speak too frequently, and with too much levity of a separation of this Union," said Clay, by way of rebuke. "It is a terrible word, to which our ears should not be familiarized. I desire to see in continued safety and prosperity *this* Union and no other Union. I go for this Union as it is, one and indivisible, without diminution. I will neither voluntarily leave it nor be driven out by force. Here, in my place, I shall contend for all the rights of the state which sent me here. I shall contend for them with undoubting confidence, and with the perfect conviction that they are safer in the Union than they would be out of the Union."

On January 9, 1838, he moved seven resolutions which he wished to substitute for those of Mr. Calhoun. They were in substance :

(1) That slavery in those states in which it exists is "subject to the exclusive power and control of those states respectively."

(2) That petitions advocating Abolition in any state in which it exists upon coming to the Senate "shall be instantly rejected without debate."

(3) That Abolition in the District of Columbia would be in violation of the good faith implied in

the cession by Virginia and Maryland to the United States of that District. In any event it could not be effected without the compensation of the owners, nor "without exciting a degree of just alarm and apprehension in the states recognizing slavery, far transcending, in mischievous tendency, any possible benefit."

(4) That "slavery ought not to be abolished within the District of Columbia," in the "deliberate judgment" of the Senate, and that "all sincere friends of the Union" should cease the agitation of the question.

(5) That it would be "highly inexpedient" to abolish slavery in the territory of Florida because of the apprehension such action would excite in the slave states; because the people of the territory have not asked it to be done; and because it would be in "violation of a solemn compromise" fixing the line between slavery and anti-slavery at 36° 30' north latitude, except in the case of Missouri.

(6) That Congress has no constitutional power to interfere with the domestic slave-trade.

(7) That in spite of sectional agitation the Senate "beholds with the deepest satisfaction everywhere prevailing an unconquerable attachment to the Union as the sure bulwark of the safety, liberty and happiness of the people of the United States."

From our point of view at this day, these declarations would seem sufficiently far from Abolitionist standards to conciliate the most devoted disciple of slavery; but Calhoun would not be conciliated. The difference between him and the senator from Kentucky, he said, was "as wide as the poles."¹

¹ Calhoun, *Speeches*, Vol. III, p. 140 *et seq.*

The net result of the discussion was, of course, nothing but more discussion, both in and out of Congress. The demands of the Abolitionists became more insistent, and on February 7, 1839, Clay addressed the Senate at considerable length in a carefully prepared statement designed to have its influence in the approaching presidential campaign. He is said to have taken counsel of his friend Senator Preston, of South Carolina, and the result was a speech which should have strengthened, and did unquestionably strengthen him and his party in the slave states. Clay spoke ostensibly to a petition of anti-Abolitionists, protesting against the movement for emancipation in the District of Columbia.

He began by reiterating his opposition to the plan which Congress had adopted of refusing respectful attention to the petitions of the Abolitionists. It was inexpedient. It created "injurious impressions upon the minds of a large portion of the community." He addressed himself then to the Abolitionists or, as he called them, the "ultra-Abolitionists," who were making this demand about the District of Columbia, who insisted that Congress should free the slaves in the territory of Florida, and who aimed to prevent the admission to the Union of any more slave states and to prohibit the traffic in slaves between the several states. To all of these propositions he opposed his arguments, and saw in the whole agitation the signs of a terrible civil war. Congress should not be petitioned on such subjects.

"The free states," he said, "have no more power or right to interfere with institutions in the

slave states, confided to the exclusive jurisdiction of those states, than they would have to interfere with institutions existing in any foreign country. What would be thought of the formation of societies in Great Britain, the issue of numerous inflammatory publications, and the sending out of lecturers throughout the kingdom, denouncing and aiming at the destruction of any of the institutions of France? Would they be regarded as proceedings warranted by good neighborhood? . . . The slavery which exists among us is our affair, not theirs; and they have no more just concern with it than they have with slavery as it exists throughout the world."

There was not only no right to interfere; there was also no possible way to deal with three million negroes suddenly given their freedom. There would at once be a war between the races, ending in the extermination or subjugation of one or the other of them. Moreover, it would be robbery to take away from its owners property valued at twelve hundred millions of dollars, and the taxes to raise such a fund could be justly assessed only upon the free states, "for it would be a mockery of all justice, and an outrage against all equity to levy any portion of the tax upon the slave states to pay for their own unquestioned property." Mr. Clay declared that the Abolitionists, instead of "advancing" their cause by their efforts, had "thrown back for half a century the prospect of any species of emancipation of the African race, gradual or immediate, in any of the states." They were doing more than this; they were increasing the rigors of legislation against slaves in the slave states. He could see in

it all only terrible injustices and dangers. "One section," he predicted, "will stand in menacing and hostile array against the other. The collision of opinion will be quickly followed by the clash of arms." And what would it be? "A conquest without laurels, without glory; a self, a suicidal conquest; a conquest of brothers over brothers, achieved by one over another portion of the descendants of common ancestors."

"I am, Mr. President, no friend of slavery," Mr. Clay said as he proceeded. "The Searcher of all hearts knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty. Wherever it is safe and practicable, I desire to see every portion of the human family in the enjoyment of it. But I prefer the liberty of my own country to that of any other people; and the liberty of my own race to that of any other race. The liberty of the descendants of Africa in the United States is incompatible with the safety and liberty of the European descendants. Their slavery forms an exception,—an exception resulting from a stern and inexorable necessity—to the general liberty in the United States."

This was not a very satisfactory statement from the standpoint of anti-slavery; indeed, the least satisfactory of all which Clay had made. To many it seemed like an important surrender, although it was but an amplification of views that he had before expressed in only a little different way. Calhoun pretended to see in the declaration very marked concessions to the South. The discussions of the past few months could not seem barren of use, if

such changes had been effected in the thinking of the senator of Kentucky to whom he had listened "with pleasure."

"There were many, very many, in the slaveholding states," said he, "who at the commencement of the controversy believed that slavery was an evil to be tolerated, because we could not escape from it, but not to be defended. That has passed away. We now believe that it has been a great blessing to both of the races—the European and African—which by a mysterious Providence have been brought together in the Southern section of the Union."

Mr. Clay had, of course, said nothing of the kind. He did, however, foresee a great sectional rupture, if the Abolitionists would not forbear, a greater one than any which had been or ever could be precipitated by the tariff issue. He must be given credit for desiring most sincerely to avoid it. His love for the Union was at all times deep and earnest, and it was his natural course now to seek for some ground of conciliation, for which work his life is principally to be remembered. It was in relation to this speech, which Calhoun so much admired, that Clay uttered one of his most famous phrases. The noble sentiment might have been called forth by service in a worthier interest, but he had the merit, then as always, it may be believed, of thinking that he was doing what the highest good demanded. The words were started on their way to immortality at a Whig meeting in Philadelphia, where Senator Preston of South Carolina spoke. Clay, he said, had consulted him as to the propriety

of making the speech lest it might offend the radicals, but had himself definitely and promptly settled the matter. "I trust the sentiments and opinions are correct," the great leader observed; "I had rather be right than be President."

Clay aimed to steer some safe middle course and his task was fraught with difficulty. On March 1, 1841, he said in the Senate: "That there is danger impending, no one will deny. The danger is in ultraism; the ultraism of a portion of the South on the one hand and from Abolition on the other. It is to be averted by a moderate but firm course; not being led off into extremes on the one side, or frightened on the other."¹

He again very clearly expressed his views upon Abolition in a letter to Jacob Gibson in 1842. He referred his correspondent to his speech in the Senate in 1839. "I regard the existence of slavery as an evil," he said; "I regret it and wish that there was not one slave in the United States. But it is an evil which, while it affects the states only, or, principally, where it abounds, each state within which it is situated is the exclusive judge of what is best to be done with it, and no other state has a right to interfere in it. Kentucky has no right to interfere with the slavery of Virginia, and Ohio has no right to interfere with it in either. The jurisdiction of each state, where slavery exists, is among the reserved rights of the states. Congress possesses no power or authority to abolish it. Congress is invested with no power relating to it, except that which assumes its legitimate and continued exist-

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 273.

ence. . . . Although I believe slavery to be an evil, I regard it as a far less evil than would arise out of an immediate emancipation of the slaves of the United States, and their remaining here mixed up in our communities. In such a contingency I believe that a bloody civil war would ensue, which would terminate only by the extinction of the black race."

He "regretted extremely the agitation of Abolition in the free states." It had "done no good, but harm." It would "do no good." "Abolition," he continued, "is a delusion which cannot last. It is impossible it should endure. What is it? In pursuit of a principle, a great principle if you please, it undertakes to tread down, and trample in the dust, all opposing principles, however sacred. It sets up the right of the people of one state to dictate to the people of other states. It arrays state against state. To make the black man free, it would virtually enslave the white man." As to what ultimately was to become of slavery he did not know. He adroitly referred the question to higher powers. "I have no doubt," said he, "that the merciful Providence which permitted its introduction into our country, against the wishes of our ancestors, will according to His own good pleasure and time, provide for its mitigation and termination."

His wish now was that the Abolitionists would "cease to agitate a topic which divides, distracts and inflames the community; which tends to array man against man, state against state, and section against section, and which threatens the greatest of

all possible calamities which could befall this people, the dissolution of the Union of these states.”¹

To suppress the issue, which was pressing its way forward to displace the older ones, was the hope of all the leaders of Clay's generation, and the more it came up to disturb their relations with accustomed questions of politics the less likely were they to treat it patiently. It was not that Clay now loved slavery more, but that he was tired of having it stuck like a goad into the flank of everything, which led to his seeming change of view. Thus did he hope to stifle the movement and reëstablish equanimity of feeling both North and South.

There was no question as to Henry Clay being the choice of the Whig party for the presidency at the election of 1844. There had been quite enough experimentation with other men, and all party sentiment was directed toward his nomination for the office. “As far as I can judge,” W. P. Mangum wrote to Clay on June 15, 1842, “I think the cause is constantly brightening. All eyes are turned in a single direction. The indecision, vacillation and the manifest want of good faith, not to say common honesty, on the part of those who administer the government have fixed the public eye upon the admitted head of the Whig party, with an intensity of interest that I am very sure has never happened before in my time.”

Mr. Clay's leaving the Senate appeared to be but his first step toward the presidency. Never had he seemed so strong, so preëminent, so indispensable. Never were his friends so many and so devoted.

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 463 *et seq.*

The next two years were to see such outbursts of love and loyalty as have probably never been evoked by any other public man in a democracy. He came to be known as the "Old Prince," and wherever he went he was the object of the most remarkable demonstrations. His return to Lexington after his retirement from the Senate in 1842 was signalized by another great barbecue. In the open air with thousands crowded about him, he responded to the following sentiment, which was proposed by the presiding officer :

"Henry Clay—farmer of 'Ashland,' patriot and philanthropist—the American statesman and unrivaled orator of the age—illustrious abroad, beloved at home : in a long career of eminent public service, often, like Aristides, he breasted the raging storm of passion and delusion, and by offering himself a sacrifice, saved the Republic ; and now like Cincinnatus and Washington, having voluntarily retired to the tranquil walks of private life, the grateful hearts of his countrymen will do him ample justice ; but come what may, Kentucky will stand by him, and still continue to cherish and defend, as her own, the fame of a son who has emblazoned her escutcheon with immortal renown."

In this speech, which was principally a review and defense of his own life, with allusions to the distressing financial situation and the attitude of President Tyler toward the party which had elected him, not one word was said about slavery. Clay ended the discourse with a spirited appeal. "Whigs," he exclaimed, "arouse from the ignoble supineness which encompasses you ; awake from the

lethargy in which you lie bound ; cast from you that unworthy apathy which seems to make you indifferent to the fate of your country. . . . You have been disappointed, deceived, betrayed ; shamefully deceived and betrayed. But will you therefore also prove false and faithless to your country, or obey the impulses of a just and patriotic indignation ? As for Captain Tyler, he is a mere snap, a flash in the pan ; pick your Whig flints and try your rifles again."

The conclusion of the speech was marked by "tremendous cheering." The audience, it is said, was the largest which had ever been assembled in Kentucky, and, while Mr. Clay specifically declared that he himself had no hand in the movement to make him the next President, this was the unmistakable intention of all his friends. "That I am thankful and grateful, profoundly grateful," he said, "for these manifestations of confidence and attachment, I will not conceal or deny. But I have been and mean to remain a passive, if not an indifferent spectator." At meetings in many states he was nominated for the office. Letters and addresses poured in upon him at "Ashland," and he was invited to visit all parts of the Union. In September, 1842, he addressed a convention of Whigs at Dayton, O., thought to number 100,000 people. He moved from place to place like some Roman conqueror. On October 1st, on his way to Indianapolis, he spoke at Richmond, Ind., a region which contained a number of Quaker families, actively interested in Abolition. A Friend named Mendenhall came forward at this place to interrogate Mr. Clay

on the subject of slavery, and to ask him to liberate his own blacks. This device was plainly intended, many thought, to embarrass the candidate ; at any rate, it very certainly had this effect. In the first place, the incident called attention to the fact that Clay was a slaveholder. And after that, if he should avow a wish to emancipate his slaves, he would probably—in the state of public opinion at the time—be set upon by the South ; while if he refused, he would do further affront to the Abolitionists of the North.

He attacked the question boldly as was his wont. The Quaker ran the risk of harsh treatment at the hands of the crowd, but the speaker pleaded for his security. Clay made it clear that to present a petition at all was unusual procedure, and that to present it while he was on a friendly visit to a neighboring state must seem inhospitable. However, he desired “no concealment” of his opinions. “I look upon it [slavery] as a great evil,” he continued, “and deeply lament that we have derived it from the parental government, and from our ancestors. I wish every slave in the United States was in the country of his ancestors.”

If he were organizing society anew, there could be no slavery in it, but that was not the question now. It was here and we must reckon with it, and, great as he thought its evils to be, “they are nothing,” he declared, “absolutely nothing in comparison with the far greater evils which would inevitably flow from a sudden, general, and indiscriminate emancipation.” He spoke again of the danger of race wars, and then told of the difficulties that

would confront him, were he to decide to liberate his own slaves. A half dozen of them were "a heavy charge" upon him by reason of their age and decrepitude. To free them would be to consign them to starvation. Another class would not accept their freedom if he should give it to them. His man Charles who accompanied him then, and who had done so on former journeys in the United States and Canada, had had a thousand opportunities to escape but he had no desire to do so. Indeed, when some Abolitionists had approached him on the point, he had said that he would not leave Mr. Clay for all Canada. "Excuse me, Mr. Mendenhall," Mr. Clay continued, "for saying that my slaves are as well fed and clad, look as sleek and hearty, and are quite as civil and respectful in their demeanor, and as little disposed to wound the feelings of any one, as you are." He owned about fifty slaves, worth, probably, \$15,000. "To turn them loose upon society without any means of subsistence or support," he continued, "would be an act of cruelty." He respected the motives of Abolitionists, who were rational in the formation and expression of their views, although he wished they would refrain from agitating the question. He had many friends among them, but they were not "monomaniacs," such as those seemed to be who had joined their names to Mr. Mendenhall's upon the petition.

The speech was received by the crowd as a masterpiece, and was published everywhere with acclamation. It seemed to render Clay's position secure in the view of his friends and the way to the presi-

dency opened clear before him, especially as Tyler continued to antagonize the Whig party, soon making the breach irreparable. Congress, after Clay had left it, wrestled with the tariff and the land sale distribution scheme, which were combined. The President twice vetoed the measure. The session seemed likely to close without any provision being made for raising the revenues necessary for the regular conduct of the government; but finally after great party asperity, the majority agreed to drop the distribution scheme, which was the especial object of Tyler's ire, and to adopt a protective tariff, known as the Tariff of 1842.

In the House John Quincy Adams was making his historic contest for the right of petition against slavery, which Clay thoroughly approved, though he "deeply regretted" it in some particulars.¹

When Giddings resigned his seat because the House condemned him for presenting an anti-slavery petition, and went home to Ohio, only to be returned by greater majorities, Clay gave him his warmest sympathy. Such proscription he could never be brought to favor, and, though he was not to be the champion of such a cause, there is no reason to think that his heart was not at all times right in reference to this subject.

Slavery had come before the nation in many ways in the past few years, but it was to be heard from in a still more ominous tone in the Texan contest, now impending. Clay had a record on this question. It will be remembered that in 1820, while he was a member of the House of Representatives, he attacked

¹ Speech at Lexington upon his return home in 1842.

the administration of President Monroe for having surrendered the right to this country in the Florida Treaty. It was his contention that it had been included in the territory acquired from France by the Louisiana Purchase. In 1827, while he was Secretary of State under Adams, he instructed Poinsett, the first United States Minister to the new republic of Mexico, to arrange to buy Texas from that country. The region, in the next few years, became the scene of much lawless adventure, to which the Southern slaveholders of the United States contributed a great deal, with a view to increasing their influence by its annexation. Further attempts were made to obtain the country by purchase, but these failing, the people, aided by American filibusters, undertook to break away from Mexican suzerainty, and establish a separate government in the hope of joining the Union in that way. A state of war existed for a long time between Mexico and the Texan "patriots," and the government of the United States was asked, of course, to recognize their independence.

Clay, though he had on many occasions proven himself the friend of struggling republics, had gained much in experience on this subject, and he inwardly revolted, as well he might, at the spectacle in Texas. He aimed to restrain the government from a precipitate course, both by speech and act. In 1837 the Texans offered themselves for sale to Van Buren but he declined their advances. Northern legislatures adopted resolutions protesting against such a policy, and it was seen to be a contest between slavery and anti-slavery, likely at any mo-

ment to assume the most dangerous appearance. Tyler took up the cause of Texas and the South, but Webster still had a place in the cabinet, and opposed the step.

The result of the elections in the autumn of 1842, so unfavorable to the Whigs, gave new zeal to the President, who now thought that his future fortune lay, perhaps, in the direction of the Democracy, and the way was clear when Webster, no longer able to continue in such company, left the State Department in May, 1843. Upshur, of Virginia, who became Secretary of State, ardently espoused the cause of Texas and the Southern slaveholders, who had pushed into the country to control its destinies. The work went forward stealthily. The Senate was canvassed with a view to getting enough members to approve a treaty of annexation. Mexico protested and threatened war, but this did not avail to deter the administration. When Upshur was killed, by the explosion of a gun, on the United States frigate *Princeton*, Tyler threw himself entirely into the arms of the enemy, and invited Calhoun to become Secretary of State, an office which he accepted, singular as the relation must have seemed to him, with the ostensible purpose of carrying through this extraordinary plot for expanding the area of slavery.

Meanwhile Clay continued to travel and address his countrymen. When he came home from his autumn tour in Ohio and Indiana in 1842, he planned a trip to New Orleans which was accomplished in the winter, and which included a large number of cities and towns, where he met with the usual marks of attention and enthusiasm. Great crowds as-

sembled to welcome him everywhere. The summer of 1843 was devoted to rest and recuperation at "Ashland." In the ensuing winter he left home for a trip through the southeastern states, going from New Orleans to Augusta, Charleston, Raleigh and intermediate places, where his followers crowded to greet and acclaim him. He seemed to be the hero of the age. He still spoke on the old Whig issues, unwilling to believe that any other called for public attention, though the Texas question, with slavery behind it, pressed insistently for recognition.

It was generally expected that Van Buren, who had visited Clay at "Ashland," would be the opposing candidate in the ensuing campaign. Tyler, in spite of his open bid for the distinction, had made no progress in winning the popular esteem. Clay and Van Buren together agreed that they would aim to avoid any declaration on the subject of Texas. If it were necessary, however, they would make a statement in disapproval of annexation. Clay was in Raleigh, N. C., swinging around through states which seemed to need the invigoration of his presence, when Calhoun and the Texan envoys, on April 12, 1844, signed the treaty by which Texas was to be joined to the United States. He could restrain himself no longer and on April 17th, the *National Intelligencer* in Washington published what at once came to be known as his "Raleigh Letter." He reviewed his own connection with the Texas matter. The country was now gone from us. The recent recognition of the independence of Texas by the United States had not impaired Mexico's claims, if she chose to continue to

assert them, and there was evidence that she did. By acquiring the territory, we would at once acquire a foreign war. As for him he would not favor annexation at any such price. Moreover, the movement met with disapproval in many states, and the need was for harmony, not for new causes of discord and strife. It were vain to attempt to strengthen the South in this way. The North could retaliate by annexing Canada.

Sane as the views expressed in it seemed to be, the letter naturally met the favor of the extremists in neither section of the Union. The course of the "pacificator" was becoming more and more difficult to pursue. Doubtless, however, the bulk of the Whig party believed the manifesto to be a correct expression of their views. Van Buren published a letter in the *Globe* opposing annexation on not very different grounds. Those who urged it, however, had fortified themselves with letters from Andrew Jackson, whose voice still had the tone of command. Thus the matter stood, when the Whig National Convention met in Baltimore on May 1st. The treaty was in the hands of the Senate awaiting a two-thirds vote. All the Whig leaders were gathered together for this great meeting; they nominated Clay with shouts that shook the building, and indeed started a panic lest it should fall to the ground. As the candidate for Vice-President, they chose Theodore Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey. Webster had now returned to the party fold and added his voice to the general chorus of enthusiasm and praise.

Three weeks later the Democrats met, also in

Baltimore. The party was now completely in the hands of Calhoun and his friends. Van Buren after a few ballots was set aside in favor of James K. Polk of Tennessee, a rabid annexationist, to whose name was added, for Vice-President, that of George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania, in order to give power to the ticket in the Middle states. The annexation of Texas was joined with a demand for the reoccupation of Oregon, and plans were shrewdly laid for a campaign founded on an expansionist programme, designed to gain great popularity. Tyler assembled his "corporal's guard" of office-holders, and was duly nominated to succeed himself, but before long, as he saw, there was nothing for him to do except to withdraw in favor of the Democratic candidate.

It was an extraordinary campaign, conducted with great spirit and energy, and marked by the same enthusiasm with which the people had been inspired four years before.¹ Harrison was almost deified as a translated leader whose mantle had been taken up only to be trampled in the dust by Tyler, of whom there was nothing good to be said. The raccoon was revived as a party emblem, and every effort was made to connect this presidential contest with the last, in the hope of sweeping the country in the same conclusive manner.

¹ "Both parties entered the field well organized and animated with high hopes. The recollection of their success in 1840 inspired the Whigs with courage, while a bitter resentment for what they deemed the treachery of Mr. Tyler which had snatched from them the fruits of their victory at the last presidential election, and their ardent attachment to their chivalric and gallant leader, kindled a zeal which spread through all ranks of the party and which approached almost to fanaticism." —*Life and Times of Silas Wright*, by Jabez Hammond, p. 496.

Everywhere was seen the *Clay Minstrel*, a book of campaign songs written for such airs as "The Star Spangled Banner," "John Anderson, My Jo," "Ole Dan Tucker," "Rosin the Bow," and "Royal Charlie." For example, there was a working-man's song, in which no trade seems to have been forgotten, to the tune of "There's Nae Luck About the House." These were some of the stanzas :

- " The Laboring Men that want more work,
And higher wages too,
Will help to put in Henry Clay
With better times in view.
They'll saw and chop, and grub and dig,
And shovel, and shovel away,
And shovel, shovel, shovel, shovel,
And vote for Henry Clay !
- " We want no clothing ready made
From England, or from France,
We've Tailors here who know their trade
They ought to have a chance.
They'll cut, and baste, and hem and press
And stitch, and stitch away,
And stitch, stitch, stitch, stitch,
And vote for Henry Clay !
- " The Coopers know when Farmers thrive
Their trade is always best,
And so they'll go with one accord
For Harry of the West.
They'll dress and raise, and truss and croze,
And hoop, and hoop away
And hoop, hoop, hoop, hoop,
And vote for Henry Clay ! "

To "Auld Lang Syne" the Whigs sang these lines :

“ Leave vain regrets for errors past
Nor cast the ship away,
But nail your colors to the mast
And strike for Harry Clay.
And strike for Harry Clay, my boys,
And strike for Harry Clay,
And nail your colors to the mast
And strike for Harry Clay ! ”

There were many campaign songs to the tune of
“ Ole Dan Tucker.” One began :

“ The moon was shining silver bright,
The stars with glory crowned the night,
High on a limb that ‘ same ole coon ’
Was singing to himself this tune —

CHORUS :

“ Get out of the way, you’re all unlucky,
Clear the track for Old Kentucky.”

But many unusual events occurred, again tending to show that some malignant fate, altogether beyond human reach, was at work to prevent Henry Clay from attaining the presidency. In the first place, there was the singular fatality of being bound up with an expansionist issue to which he was or seemed to be opposed. Then there was the Liberty party which had nominated James G. Birney, a mere fleck on the sky, but full of ominous threat under the direction of devoted men determined to give their support to no candidate who did not favor the unconditional emancipation of the slaves. Then, too, an extraordinary fraud was practiced in Pennsylvania, where it was made to appear that the Democratic rather than the Whig party was the safeguard

of protection. A governor was to be elected there in October. It was felt that as Pennsylvania went the nation would go, and the state became a bitterly contested battle-ground.

Though Polk was a free-trader, few knew this, or indeed very much else regarding him.¹ During the campaign it was a familiar Whig device to ask, "Who is Polk?" a question which was always answered by a loud guffaw. Dallas had been nominated for the express purpose of forwarding a deception on the tariff issue in Pennsylvania and the Eastern states. "Polk, Dallas, and the Tariff of 1842," a measure which had gained the approval of the manufacturers, was a combination of words appearing everywhere in popular speech, in the newspapers and on banners and transparencies carried in processions. These dexterous campaigners sometimes added the words: "We dare the Whigs to repeal it." It speaks not well for the intelligence of the people of Pennsylvania that a considerable number of them should have abandoned Clay, the very prototype of the "American system," in favor of a party which had always opposed protection, and which in 1846 actually did repeal the law whereby, through their cries in that state, they had elected Polk two years before. The Democratic candidate for governor, Shunk, was elected in October by a majority of 4,397 and the

¹ "He was a comparatively unknown man, although he had served as Speaker of the House of Representatives. He therefore excited no antagonism."—*A History of Presidential Elections* by Edward Stanwood, p. 157.

Governor Letcher of Kentucky wrote to Mr. Buchanan: "Polk! Great God, what a nomination!"

morale of the Whig party throughout the country was broken for the national contest to follow in November.

Then, too, there must be a revival of the bargain and sale story. Jackson was dying at the "Hermitage," but he raised himself to repeat this foul slander that it might again do service, if it would, in the campaign of 1844. Clay and his friends evidently thought that it still contained dangers for them, and they again bent themselves to the task of refuting it.

The progress of the Texas question was such that it injected itself into the campaign to the exclusion of almost every other issue in the South as well as in those Northern states in which the Abolitionist element had strength. On June 8th, the Senate by a vote of thirty-five to sixteen refused its assent to the treaty of annexation, and a little later adjourned, leaving Tyler, if he could, to find some other way of effecting his object.

As the campaign progressed, Clay's friends, especially in the South, grew anxious for his fate, and he was, wisely or unwisely, induced to qualify the statements which he had pronounced in the "Raleigh Letter." He did this in correspondence with Stephen F. Miller of Tuscaloosa, Ala. Some had said that when he had spoken of opposition to annexation in the North, which he wished the nation to heed, it was an allusion to the Abolitionists. This Clay emphatically denied. It was "perfectly absurd." "No man in the United States has been half as much abused by them [the Abolitionists] as I have been." He added: "Personally I

could have no objection to the annexation of Texas ; but I certainly should be unwilling to see the existing Union dissolved, or seriously jeopardized, for the sake of acquiring Texas. If any one desires to know the leading and paramount object of my public life, the preservation of the Union will furnish him the key."

In another letter to Mr. Miller he went on to say : "Far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I should be glad to see it without dishonor, without war, and upon just and fair terms. I do not think that the subject of slavery ought to affect the question one way or the other."

He had never said that it should, but the Liberty party men, most of whom had been Whigs, and felt that they had a greater right to be his judges on this account, aimed now to prevent his election by any means in their power.

It was a difficult matter for Clay to explain his "Alabama Letters" in the North, though he essayed the feat. He was subjected to the charge of inconsistency by such leaders as Giddings of Ohio, to whom he wrote several "private and confidential" epistles, explanatory of the statements he had made to his friend in Tuscaloosa. He was sorry, he said, writing from "Ashland," on September 11, 1844, to know that there was any misunderstanding in Ohio. "It was not my intention," he continued, "to vary the ground in the smallest degree which I had assumed in my Raleigh letter. It had been represented to me that in that letter I had displayed a determined opposition to the annexation of Texas to the United States, although the whole Union might

be in favor of it, and it could be peacefully and honorably effected upon fair and just terms. It was my purpose in those Alabama letters to say that no personal or private motives prompted me to oppose annexation, but that my opinion in opposition to it was founded solely upon public and general considerations. I, therefore, said that if by common consent of the Union, without national dishonor, and without war, and upon just conditions, the object of annexation could be accomplished, I did not wish to be considered as standing in opposition to the wishes of the whole confederacy, but, on the supposition stated, would be glad to see those wishes gratified. Could I say less?"

If three such states as Ohio, Massachusetts and Vermont "were to manifest a decided opposition to the annexation of Texas," he said positively, "it ought not to be annexed to the United States." He was in a singular position, he wrote to Giddings. "Whilst at the South I am represented as a liberty man, at the North I am described as an ultra supporter of slavery, when in fact I am neither one nor the other."¹

While the entire vote for Birney was small, the activity of the party was undoubtedly effective in chilling the anti-slavery Whigs in Ohio as well as in New York, where the margin was very close. It was at any rate a pleasure for the Abolitionists to assert that but for them he would have been elected, though the declaration could have been made quite as positively by other interests engaged in the work

¹ Giddings letters published in the *Cleveland Herald* in February, 1879.

of defeating the hopes of his party in this remarkable campaign. In Pennsylvania, if there had been no defection of the protectionists, Clay would have fared much better. Having that state, and with the help of Georgia, where the vote was also very close, he would have been elected. Without the "Alabama Letters," which were thought to have done him harm in the North, he very possibly would have carried a smaller number of the Southern states. It seemed impossible to believe that a leader like Clay, known of all men and deeply beloved as he was by so many of them, could have been defeated by such an opponent as Polk. But so it was to be. The Whigs waited day after day, always with hope and a conviction that fuller returns would put a different aspect upon affairs. Even for the Democrats it was a victory over which they did not feel able to exult, so small were the majorities, and so doubtful did they appear to be of the justice of the result. Clay had carried Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio—in all he had 105 electoral votes. Polk had carried Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Indiana, Illinois, Alabama, Missouri, Arkansas and Michigan,—in all 170 votes. Several of these states were won by small pluralities :

New York	5,106
Pennsylvania	6,332
Virginia	5,873
Georgia	1,944

Indiana	2,344
Louisiana	699
Michigan	3,466

There were charges of fraud in at least four of them, and honest and searching investigation might have changed the verdict in Clay's favor. It is credibly reported that places of business were closed or deserted, while the astounding news was discussed in subdued and funereal tones, and that men and women wept. Such disappointment and grief were never seen after any election in this country. Clay's friends entirely despaired of the republic. Their last hope for it was fled. He seemed

"A great man struggling with the storms of fate,
And nobly falling with a falling state."

Letters poured in upon him from entire strangers in all parts of the Union, offering him their sympathy and assuring him of their continued love and esteem. A Pennsylvanian did not hesitate to declare that Mr. Clay had "nine-tenths of the virtue, intelligence and respectability of the nation on his side." Millard Fillmore was "unmanned." He had "no courage or resolution." "All is gone," he wrote. "The last hope which hung first upon the city of New York, and then upon Virginia is finally dissipated, and I see nothing but despair depicted on every countenance."¹

To Senator Preston of South Carolina the result was a "public calamity."

There were prayers for the country which had been so basely betrayed. One wrote: "I have

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 479.

buried a Revolutionary father who poured out his blood for his country ; I have followed a mother, brothers, sisters and children to the grave ; and, although I hope I have felt under all these afflictions, as a son, a brother and a father should feel, yet nothing has so crushed me to the earth and depressed my spirits as the result of our late political contest."

The grief, said another, "extended itself through all ages, sexes and conditions from lisping infancy to hoary age."

"Great God ! is it possible," exclaimed a friend in London, when the news came to him. "The hopes of the wise and of the worthy of the new and of the old world rested upon you."

An old sea-captain in Providence was heard to say : "Could my life insure the success of Henry Clay, I would freely lay it down this day."

A lady in Maryland sent him a counterpane with complimentary lines embroidered upon it. It was the work of her own hands in the ninety-third year of her age. The women of Virginia set themselves to the task of raising money for the erection of a statue of the great leader, and employed Joel T. Hart to execute it. The gold and silver artisans of New York sent him a splendid silver vase, and the representatives of many industries which he had aided by his advocacy of the protective system during his long congressional career, united to honor and befriend him. Whig party organizations met and adopted resolutions which were duly forwarded to "Ashland," some beautifully engrossed and some in silver caskets. In short, every

possible testimony of continued popular devotion came to lighten the burdens of defeat. A gold pen was sent from New York, and a casket of jewels for Mrs. Clay from Philadelphia, with a book containing several thousand names of both sexes, young and old, handsomely printed and bound by a publishing house in that city, entitled, "A Testimonial of Gratitude and Affection to Henry Clay." It was probably true, as one correspondent remarked, that Clay had "long since passed that point when office could confer additional celebrity, or add one inch to the noble preëminence which history will assign to you."

He himself was more bitterly disappointed than any but the members of his family and his closest friends could know. It is stated that on the night the news of his defeat reached "Ashland," Mrs. Clay took him in her arms and said as they wept together: "My husband, this ungrateful people can never truly appreciate you while living. Thank God, they have left you in the bosom of your family, in this your dear 'Ashland.'" Such a victory, believing as Mr. Clay did, was to him, as it was to John Quincy Adams, "a dark shade" cast upon the nation's "prospects of futurity." "I had hoped," wrote Adams, "that under your guidance the country would have recovered from the downward tendency into which it has been sinking."¹ It was not in any spirit of personal vainglory, therefore, that Clay wrote to a friend: "The late blow that has fallen upon our country is very heavy. I hope that she may recover from it, but I confess

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 520.

that the prospect ahead is dark and discouraging. I am afraid that it will be yet a long time, if ever, that the people recover from the corrupting influence and effects of Jacksonism. I pray God to give them a happy deliverance."

In what ways he would or could have changed the course of the nation by coming to the President's office in 1844, and whether or not the experience would have improved his place in history, are questions which may be discussed but cannot be certainly determined by any amount of debate.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST GREAT COMPROMISE

THIS extraordinary outburst of popular love was not soon to consume itself by its own unusual ardor. In no way was Clay more sincerely touched than by a movement, secretly begun and prosecuted, to relieve him from pressing financial necessities which promised him a disturbed old age. He had once before been the victim of financial misfortunes, not brought upon him by acts of his own. Now again, through the reverses of a son engaged in the hemp business in Kentucky, he was greatly embarrassed. His prolonged absences in Washington had compelled him to neglect his private affairs and a heavy mortgage encumbered "Ashland." The large demands made upon him led him to wonder whether he would not be obliged to part with his beloved and now famous home.

Suddenly, through the foresight and care of vigilant friends in all parts of the Union, relief came to him. One day in 1845, when Mr. Clay was about to make a payment on a note, a banker in Lexington informed him that the money was at hand to extinguish all his debts, including the mortgage on "Ashland." "Who did this?" Clay asked with deep emotion. The banker said that he was not at liberty to tell, if indeed he could ascertain the names

of the givers ; it was sufficient to know that they were not his "enemies." ¹

Clay debated the matter with his friends. He was loath to accept such a gift, especially as he knew not whom to thank for it, but he determined to take it gratefully. A friend in New Orleans wrote him : "In all ages signal public services have been rewarded by national benefactions. In our own day Siéyes and Wellington have had grants of domains ; the debts of Pitt have been paid by Parliament ; Fox did not disdain the assistance of his friends. Your memory will furnish innumerable other instances. If republics are ungrateful, it is the more necessary that private individuals should perform the duty neglected by the public authorities." ²

Indeed, there was no other course to pursue. The gift appeared as an already discharged obligation, and that was the end of it. The sum subscribed seems to have amounted to about \$50,000. The movement was directed in New Orleans, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, and with so much delicacy and tact that neither then nor since has any one revealed particular information concerning it. It was a spontaneous tribute from sincere hearts. ³ The tears started into Clay's eyes whenever he thought of this last mark of the love of his friends.

To the charge that Clay had no hope to offer to those who were opposed to slavery, his response

¹ Colton, Vol. I, p. 44.

² *Private Correspondence*, p. 528.

³ *Last Seven Years*, p. 40.

was a continued interest in the work of the Colonization Society. He believed that some of the negroes, at least, whenever they were freed, could be returned to Africa. As for the ultimate extinction of the evil, it could come only at some "distant day," as he had said in one of his "Alabama Letters," and no other method presented itself to his mind than the inscrutable and a not very certain interposition of Providence, who had blessed the nation in its past history, and whose favors we must pray Him to continue to bestow.

Tyler found in Clay's defeat an endorsement of his annexation policy, and he pursued it obstinately. An effort was now made to accomplish this object by joint resolution. A two-thirds vote could not be obtained in the Senate; a resolution needed but a simple majority in both houses. On January 25, 1845, this measure passed the House, with an amendment, approved by Stephen A. Douglas among others, specifying that such states as should be formed out of the territory acquired, if they lay north of the Missouri Compromise line, should be free.

The senators still balked, thinking that their body was being deprived of a constitutional function; but they were brought to favor the resolution, and Tyler, trusting nothing to Polk, hurried off an envoy before his term expired. The Texas Senate, by joint resolution, approved the plan to join the United States, and such determined and high-handed methods were soon used, both by the Texan government, and by Polk and his advisers, that war with Mexico, as Clay had predicted, inevitably ensued. The administration, having

linked the Oregon with the Texas question, was also in a fair way to involve the country in a war with England in its desire to obey the popular demand of "Fifty-four forty or fight." Fortunately this difficulty was disposed of in a peaceful manner, and the country could give its attention to its war with Mexico.

It seemed an outrageous proceeding to Clay and to all thinking men, except those who were the devoted allies of slavery. During the late winter and spring of 1846, he had again gone to New Orleans, where he was so much valued and esteemed. Returning in April he stopped, on his way up the river, at St. Louis. There, and everywhere, he was a mark for popular homage. The legislature of Kentucky desired to reëlect him to the Senate, but he declined on the ground that he needed rest and that his public life was done. The winter of 1846-1847 was again spent in New Orleans. During this visit he was induced to address a meeting called in behalf of the sufferers from the potato famine in Ireland, which he did with much feeling and eloquence. "Shall it [this appeal to the sympathy of American hearers] be in vain?" he asked. "Shall starving Ireland—the young and the old—dying women and children—stretch out their hands to us for bread and find no relief? Will not this great city, the world's storehouse of an exhaustless supply of all kinds of food, borne to its overflowing warehouses by the Father of Waters, act on this occasion in a manner worthy of its high destiny and obey the noble impulses of the generous hearts of its blessed inhabitants?" The speech, being generally

reported, awakened feelings of deep gratitude in Ireland, as well as elsewhere. Even in this day children in Ireland are told of Henry Clay and his noble efforts in behalf of their country in that hour of need.

With his deep disappointment as to the course of public events, another crushing sorrow came to Clay, —the death of his son, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Clay, at the battle of Buena Vista. He had now lost all of his daughters and this son, the third, was a favorite, deeply loved. He had been educated at West Point and had later entered the law, giving promise of great ability. Upon the outbreak of the Mexican War he offered his services, and became the lieutenant-colonel of a Kentucky regiment in the army of General Taylor. The old statesman was in danger of breaking down under this affliction and in the summer, after a sojourn in the Virginia mountains, he went to Cape May, N. J. He wished to enjoy rest on the seacoast and the sea-baths in which he had never before had the opportunity to indulge.

Hither his friends followed him. A delegation arrived from New York to say :

“ We come in the name of 400,000 persons to ask you once more to visit our metropolis. Permit us, we pray you, sir, to announce to our friends, with the speed of lightning, that Henry Clay will come to them. The great aggregate heart of our city is throbbing to bid you welcome, thrice welcome, to its hospitalities.”

Others invited him to Philadelphia, New Haven and Trenton. He addressed them in a speech, tell-

ing them the reason for his journey. He spoke with deep emotion of the death of his son, once covering his face with his hands for some minutes, until he could recover himself. It was his wish to dispose completely of the thought that he had any political object in view, for there were already loud demands that in 1848 he should again be the presidential candidate of the Whig party. He was deeply touched "that I a private, and humble citizen, without an army, without a navy, without even a constable's staff, should have been met at every step of my progress with the kindest manifestations of feeling,—manifestations of which at present a monarch or an emperor might well be proud." He begged his visitors from the various cities to retrace their steps, "charged and surcharged with my warmest feelings of gratitude."

The Whigs were not skilfully led in Congress, and they had an unpopular cause in opposition to the extension of the national domain, but they won an important victory in the elections of 1846. They converted a large Democratic into a small Whig majority in the House, and the party felt itself materially invigorated. The war proceeded so easily and triumphantly that Mexico was soon completely at our mercy, and many of the slaveholders, by whom the contest had been begun and for whose advantage it had been waged, thought seriously of annexing not only Texas but Mexico itself. Clay was called upon from all sides for his advice. On November 13, 1847, with General Scott standing in Mexico City, the old statesman addressed an immense assembly which had gathered in Lexington

to hear him. The war was an "unnatural war." He spoke of its slaughter and of its expense. "Every war," said he, "unhinges society, disturbs its peaceful and regular industry, and scatters poison and seeds of disease and immorality, which continue to germinate and diffuse their baneful influences long after it has ceased." He told how the nation had become involved in this war. It was the inevitable result of the annexation of Texas. He opposed even the suggestion of the annexation of Mexico, or of any other conquered country. In this case the people professed and cherished a different religion which would make the undertaking still more hazardous. "Those whom God and geography have pronounced should live asunder," said he, "could never be permanently and harmoniously united together."

Moreover, this Union did not need Mexico for its own "happiness or greatness." We already had space, and to spare, for all our inhabitants. He had opposed the annexation of Texas "with honest zeal and most earnest exertions," but being ours, it would be folly to throw her "back upon her own independence, or into the arms of Mexico." As for the annexation of Mexico it, too, was not to be thought of by any honorable man. "Of all the dangers and misfortunes which could befall this nation," said he, "I should regard that of its becoming a warlike and conquering power the most direful and fatal." By such a course we would affix "to our name and national character, a similar if not a worse stigma than that involved in the partition of Poland." At the conclusion of the speech

Clay offered eight resolutions, expressive of his views. The seventh of these was as follows :

“Resolved, that we do positively and emphatically disclaim and disavow any wish or desire on our part to acquire any foreign territory whatever for purposes of propagating slavery, or of introducing slaves from the United States into such foreign territory.”

The Whigs of the country were invited to meet and express their feelings and opinions upon the subject, and they responded at once, endorsing Clay and his resolutions in the most emphatic terms. In the large cities the meetings attained enormous proportions. His voice came as a “trumpet blast,” said an address adopted by a great assemblage in New York. In that city his Lexington speech was printed in gold letters and elegantly bound, with a frontispiece portrait. He was shown standing upon a rock. At his right was a sailor holding the American flag ; on the left an artisan, emblematic of the peaceful pursuits which his policies had done so much to cultivate.

That the party everywhere looked to Clay as its leader, and poured upon, indeed overwhelmed him with, expressions of its affection and confidence, led him to say naught in discouragement of proposals to bring his name before the nominating convention in 1848. Thurlow Weed, who had cheated Clay out of the prize in 1840, and taken up a military candidate, now again sought a returning “hero” from the Mexican battle-fields. Zachary Taylor seemed to meet the requirements of the case from the standpoint of the “practical politicians” in the party.

Despite the fact that he had spent his life on the frontier, and was without party affiliations—he had never in his life attended an election to vote for any one—it was conceived that he would be a good Whig leader.

Needless to say, Clay did not accede to this view. It was his objection to Jackson, of course, that he was a military chieftain, and was without knowledge or skill in civil matters. He wrote to Daniel Ullman on May 12, 1847, that, if General Taylor were chosen, the nation, in his opinion, could “bid adieu to the election ever again of any man to the office of Chief Magistrate, who is not taken from the army. Both parties will stand committed to the choice of military men. Each in the future will seek to bring him forward who will be most likely to secure the public suffrage. Military chieftain will succeed military chieftain until at last one will reach the presidency who, more unscrupulous than his predecessors, will put an end to our liberties and establish a throne of military despotism.”¹

The course of opinion, however remarkable it may seem, was steadily in the direction of the nomination of this ignorant man. Serious doubt as to the wisdom of again making Clay the candidate of the party was expressed by a friend as warm and close to him as John J. Crittenden. “I prefer Mr. Clay to all men for the presidency,” he wrote, “but my conviction, my involuntary conviction, is that he cannot be elected.”

In the winter of 1847–1848 Mr. Clay visited Washington to appear in a case before the Supreme

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 541–542.

Court. For a number of years he had been president of the American Colonization Society, in whose purposes, as we have seen, he had a sincere belief. The annual meetings were held in Washington in January, and he had not been able to attend them since his retirement from the Senate. Now another opportunity came, and the society, in order to accommodate all those who would be present, secured the use of the hall of the House of Representatives. The sessions were usually held in the First Presbyterian Church. This year, however, the Capitol itself would not suffice to contain the crowds drawn there, not because of any interest in the subject of colonization, but to see and hear Henry Clay.

Men came from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond and other distant cities. "Whole acres" of them, according to Alexander H. Stephens, who had his own experiences in pressing his insignificant frame into the chamber by a side door, were turned away. Clay himself could scarcely get into the auditory. The call for an address was unexpected, he said. "I have just terminated an arduous journey of many hundreds of miles made in midwinter," he reminded his hearers, "and wherever I have been it has invariably been my lot to be surrounded by throngs." Therefore he had not had the opportunity to make "a solitary note," to guide him through such remarks as he should offer. He had been one of the founders of the society which now for twenty-five years had been sending free negroes to Liberia. "Far, very far, was it from our purpose to interfere with the slaves, or to shake or affect the title by which they are held in the least

degree whatever." He would not touch upon the subject of slavery, with which the society itself was not concerned, and though extremists among slaveholders on the one side, and Abolitionists on the other should denounce, through misunderstanding, the work of the society, it was doing that which must be done,—effecting the separation of races who could never become "one homogeneous people."

The audience shouted and applauded, as crowds ever did in Clay's magnetic presence. Representative Sherrerd, of North Carolina, remarked to Stephens that "Clay could get more men to run after him to hear him speak and fewer to vote for him than any man in America."¹

The Supreme Court room on February 12th, when Clay appeared there in *Houston vs. the City Bank of New Orleans*, was also densely packed, and thus it was wherever he went. While in Washington he dined at the President's. "Madam," he said to Mrs. Polk on this occasion, "I have never heard any one make the least complaint of your administration, though I have occasionally heard some complaint of your husband's." The sudden fatality, which on February 22d befell John Quincy Adams, who at eighty-one was stricken by paralysis while he sat in his place in the House of Representatives, very painfully affected Clay. He visited the old statesman, who had been his companion in arms for so many years. Though Adams was quite unconscious Mr.

¹Schurz, Vol. II, pp. 269-270, following Johnston and Browne's *Life of Stephens*, which gives the date of Stephens's letter reporting this meeting as 1845, manifestly errs. The date must be 1848. Clay did not attend the meeting of the Colonization Society in 1845. See its reports for those years.

Clay took one of the limp hands in his own and gave way to his grief.

Going on to Philadelphia, Clay was treated to a public reception in Independence Hall. He feelingly spoke of Mr. Adams, news of whose death overtook him at Baltimore. A pressing invitation to go to New York was accepted. A delegation of the citizens of Philadelphia, in the olden style, accompanied him as an escort as far as Amboy, where he was received by a committee representing New York, whose guest he was to be. The mayor formally welcomed him. Again he must respond. Again there was a procession through the streets crowded with shouting people, and there seemed nothing left but another canvass with Clay as the Whig standard-bearer.

Upon his return to "Ashland" he continued to receive letters from his friends, advising him in regard to the course of the campaign for his nomination by the convention, which was to meet in Philadelphia on June 7th. Hopeful accounts of his prospects were transmitted to him, and he was not vain in believing that, if he could be chosen over a mere general in the Mexican War, it was his duty not to interfere, while his friends pressed his candidacy. The Democrats, in passing the free trade tariff of 1846, had alienated those protectionist elements which they had deceived in 1844. Mr. Clay's publicly-expressed sympathy for the Irish sufferers by famine was thought to mean much in reference to the foreign vote which had been cast against him in 1844. Many excellent arguments were cited in favor of his nomination. He, however, was not swift to

yield. He wrote to Thomas B. Stevenson on December 2, 1847: "I am most unwilling to be thought to desire a nomination for the presidency. If better can be done without my name than with it, for God's sake, let me be passed by. But if I am to be used, I desire that I may be brought forward under the most auspicious circumstances."¹

On February 19, 1848, he again wrote to Stevenson: "I maintain my passive attitude; neither for the present consenting to, nor refusing the use of my name."

His friends in Ohio were particularly insistent, and from the highest sources in the party came promises of the support of his name in the convention. By reason of these representations he published a note in a newspaper expressive of his willingness again to be the Whig candidate. "Having taken this ground," he said in April, 1848, recalling the unfortunate campaign of four years before, "I mean henceforward to abstain from writing any political letters for publication, whatever the consequences may be. I have adopted this resolution not from any desire to conceal my opinions, but from a perfect conviction derived from sad experience that all such letters, from perversion or misrepresentation, do more harm than good."

No candidate could be elected without some of the slave states and he would receive, he thought, the votes of Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maryland, and, probably, Louisiana and Florida.²

¹ Colton, Vol. III, p. 461.

² These facts are from the Stevenson letters in Colton, Vol. III, appendix.

The mortification of the next few weeks was great, and he should have been spared it. The opportunist office-seeking leaders, spoken of as the "congressional clique,"—those who had preferred Harrison to Clay in the Harrisburg convention in 1839,—aided by some new recruits, were now again in control of the party machinery. As many as seven out of the twelve Kentucky delegates voted for Taylor. It was cause for great disappointment to Clay that his old friend Crittenden¹ should now oppose him. Ohio, whose support had been confidently expected, deserted him in an incomprehensible way. On the first ballot the vote was, Taylor 111, Clay 97, Scott 43, Webster 22, Clayton 4 and McLean 2. Clay's vote fell and Taylor's gained until the fourth ballot, when the latter was nominated.

The result was far from pleasing to many of the delegates, and the convention adjourned in confusion. It adopted no statement of party principles ;

¹ Happily there was a reunion between Mr. Clay and Mr. Crittenden before Mr. Clay's death. The latter one day said to a friend whose hand he took in his own : "My friend, my dear friend—I must call you so for I have known you so long and so well—there is one thing that has troubled me, and that is that Mr. Crittenden should have suffered in the public estimation for his conduct in relation to the election of General Taylor and I regret that I was in an error about it even for a moment myself. I am now satisfied that his whole conduct in that matter was what Mr. Crittenden's friends would have expected of him, and I wish you to disabuse the public mind on this subject, and do not forget it."—Orlando Brown to Mr. Clay's son, Thomas H. Clay, July 19, 1852.

When Crittenden was mentioned as a candidate for the Whig nomination for President in 1852, Clay was asked if he would favor it. He replied : "Mr. Crittenden and myself are now cordial friends, and if it be necessary to bring him forward as the candidate, it will meet my hearty approbation."—J. R. Underwood to Thomas H. Clay, August 3, 1852.

its candidate for the presidency avowed none. Clay felt this indignity more than any which he had before suffered. To Stevenson he wrote on June 14, 1848:

"The less said the better about the result of the late Whig convention at Philadelphia. I believe that I can bear it with much less regret than my warm-hearted friends. Whatever I do feel is principally on their account, and on account of the principles which were at issue, and which have been so little regarded. I have not lost one hour's sleep, nor one meal of victuals. Accustomed as I have been to disappointments and to afflictions, they disturb now, less than ever, my composure. I hope that I derive some support from a resignation to the will of the great Disposer of all events."

He wished to know why Ohio had failed. Except at the urgent solicitation of that state, he would not have allowed his name to come before the convention on any account. But he had no reproaches. What had been done was done. His friends were less philosophic. It was, said one of them, "the greatest act of national injustice" which it was in the power of the delegates to perform. The proceeding was described as "treachery," which met with "the execrations of the mass of the party." The convention, said another, had committed the "double crime of suicide and parricide." It had killed itself and its parent at one blow.

Mr. Clay had cordially given his support to Harrison in 1840, but he could and would not now forward Taylor's campaign. He would "remain quiet," he wrote to a friend, submitting to what had been

done in so far as it related to himself. He could not favor Taylor as a Whig, when the candidate declared that he was a "no party" man, without definite principles. Indeed, before the meeting of the convention he had written Clay a letter, which the latter had magnanimously neglected to make public until long afterward, saying that he meant to run for President in any event, whether he were nominated as a Whig or not, a fact which Mr. Clay's friends always believed would have been fatal to the general's prospects if it had been disclosed at the right time.

"In such a contest," said Clay, "I can feel no enthusiasm, and I am not hypocrite enough to affect what I do not feel. . . . My race is run. During the short time which remains to me in this world I desire to preserve untarnished that character which so many have done me the honor to respect and esteem. . . . Seeking to influence nobody, I hope to be permitted to pursue for myself the dictates of my own conscience."¹

Naturally, in the heat of the canvass he was violently criticized by Taylor's partisans for not giving his aid to the candidate. "It [the criticism] does not disturb my equanimity," he wrote to Stevenson on August 5th, "nor will it drive me from the even tenor of my way. All my solicitude now in regard to myself is to preserve untarnished my humble fame, and I mean to be the exclusive judge of the best means to accomplish that object."

He was never out of the public mind. A vacancy occurring in the United States Senate, the governor

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 567-568.

asked him to accept the appointment, but he declined. Taylor having allied himself with the slaveholders, in the view of many Northern Whigs, efforts were made, late in the campaign, to obtain Clay's consent to lead a third party, but he promptly refused. He was still unwilling to say that he would vote for Taylor, although every effort was made to obtain such a statement from him. No one should be misled by him. He was induced to say, however, that he could not favor General Cass.

Slavery and anti-slavery were to enter into the contest as never before, with strange results. Taylor secured the votes of fifteen states, including eight slave states, and won ; but the victory was the knell of the Whig party. Like its other President, Harrison, Taylor died after a short incumbency of his office, which passed to Millard Fillmore, the Vice-President, a respected leader of the party in New York state, of whom Mr. Clay thought and spoke with favor.

The winter of 1848-1849 was again spent in New Orleans. Mr. Clay had said before going South, in answer to many inquiries, that if it were the desire of the legislature to send him again to the Senate, he would accept the office. He scented the battle from afar, and was a little restive to be where he could take a part in the great sectional conflict. The election, which was for a full term of six years, was a satisfaction to him, and afforded him the opportunity to figure in another important national scene.

While he was absent in the South, Kentucky had in hand a bitter anti-slavery discussion, induced by

the election of a convention to revise the state constitution. On February 17, 1849, he sent from New Orleans to Richard Pindell in Lexington a long letter, wherein he expressed his views on the subject of emancipation. He had always insisted that it was a matter for the states, and now that his own Kentucky was face to face with the issue, his heart was found in the right place. The question was whether slavery should be permitted to continue to exist indefinitely, or whether some provision should not be made for its "gradual and ultimate extinction." Clay's plan called for arrangements to free at a specified age, say twenty-five, all slaves born after 1855 or 1860. Others would remain slaves for life. When liberated they should be removed to some colony like Liberia, the cost of the transfer to be defrayed out of a fund raised by the hire of the freedmen at profitable labor. It was a slow and cautious process. It promised nothing for a long term of years, and then a difficult and, as we think now, an impracticable scheme of colonization. After unfolding his plan, Mr. Clay said :

"Kentucky enjoys high respect and honorable consideration throughout the Union and throughout the civilized world ; but in my humble opinion no title which she has to the esteem and admiration of mankind, no deeds of her former glory would equal in greatness and grandeur that of being the pioneer state in removing from her soil every trace of human slavery, and in establishing the descendants of Africa within her jurisdiction in the native land of their forefathers."

The not very favorable reception of Clay's sug-

gestions must have been foreseen. On March 3d he wrote to his son James: "As I regret to hear that it is not popular, I suppose that my letter will bring on me some odium. I nevertheless wish it published. I owe that to the cause, and to myself and to posterity."¹

Of course, naught came of the project. Proposals looking toward emancipation, of whatever kind, seemed only to increase the determination of the slaveholders to prove to the world that their institution was irreproachable, if not really sacred. The summer for Mr. Clay was spent quietly at "Ashland," he not having taken the trip East for the "call session." "I shall go to Washington if I am spared," he wrote, "with a firm determination to oppose or support measures according to my deliberate sense of their effects upon the interests of our country."² He left home on November 1st, and on his way passed two or three weeks in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, where, as he wrote his son, his presence "excited the usual enthusiasm" among his friends. He took a parlor and a bedroom at the National Hotel in Washington, and was attended by a valet, a free colored man. He was early invited to dine with the President, but their relations, as in Louisiana, where they had met after the election, were not more than formally civil.

The bitterness of feeling over the slavery question, which had developed in Mr. Clay's absence, was much greater than he could believe. Despite his protests against the recognition of the issue, it had pressed its way into everything, and a time was

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 585.

² *Ibid.*, p. 588.

at hand when, if some compromise could not be effected, the Union might be considered at an end. The Southern leaders were not at all pleased to note Clay's return to Washington, thinking that his influence upon Taylor and the Whig administration would unfavorably affect them. He no sooner reached there than he took measures to check disunion sentiment. He wrote to General Leslie Combs, asking him to organize public meetings in Kentucky to stem the progress of the scheme for the disruption of the government. Mississippi, in May, 1849, had taken the lead in an address to the people of the South, asking them to send delegates to a convention to be held in Nashville on the first Monday in June, 1850. The support of Kentucky was confidently expected by the leaders, and Clay was determined that it should not be given. In his letter to Combs he said :

“The feeling for disunion among some intemperate Southern politicians is stronger than I hoped, or supposed it could be. The masses generally, even at the South, are, I believe, yet sound ; but they may become influenced and perverted. The best counteraction of that feeling is to be derived from popular expressions of public meetings of the people.”¹

These were held in Kentucky and in other states at Clay's patriotic instigation. It was his plan to speak little in Congress, and when he did it would be with a view to endeavoring to “throw oil upon the troubled waters.” In the hope that he would have small part in the proceedings he was mistaken,

¹ *Private Correspondence*, p. 593.

for he at once took his old post as the leader of the Senate—indeed, he could be naught but a leader anywhere.

The burning question was the treatment of slavery in the empire which had been acquired as a result of the Mexican War. Clay knew, and said in his correspondence, that this war had been waged on Southern advice, and that the great accessions to the national domain were made at the dictation of the South. Indeed, all the recent extensions of the national area were effected to satisfy the South, while the domination of its leaders in the counsels of the Union had materially interfered with the development of the manufacturing interests of the Northern people. The Wilmot Proviso, that slavery should be forever prohibited in all the territory acquired from Mexico, had Clay's sincere approval. If the South did not control her passions and ambitions, the result would be "the formation of a sectional and Northern party, which will sooner or later take permanent exclusive possession of the government."

In California and New Mexico the people were busily at work planning constitutions which would lead to their becoming states of the Union. Taylor, though much was expected of him as a slaveholder, insisted that both California and New Mexico had the right to come into the Union as free states, if this were their wish. The Southern hotspurs—Calhoun's brood—had never before been so numerous and active. Slavery influenced their view of every subject. A simple proposal to give the privileges of the floor of the Senate to Father Mathew, the

famous temperance advocate, met with Southern opposition because he had once signed an anti-slavery petition in Ireland. Such a course deserved a stronger reproof than that which came from Clay, but he chose his words in his great desire to pacify the Southern leaders. "I put it in all seriousness, in a spirit of the most perfect kindness to the honorable senator from Alabama," he said, "whether this pushing the subject of slavery, in its collateral and remote branches upon all possible occasions that may arise, during our deliberations in this body, is not impolitic, unwise, and injurious to the stability of the very institution which I have no doubt the honorable gentleman would uphold."

Day by day, in his remarks upon great and small subjects, he brought back into the Senate that spirit of courtesy toward an antagonist, and general suavity of demeanor in debate, which were in danger of disappearing in our national parliamentary bodies, and soon after he left the chamber, did entirely disappear. While he was putting into order his plans for some healing measure—it was only the purpose of applying balm to the distracted country which had caused him to consent, at his age, to leave his home and resume his place in the Senate,—many questions arose to claim his attention. An advertisement, which he had chanced to see in a newspaper, of the sale of the original manuscript copy of Washington's "Farewell Address," gave him an opportunity to recall, to the minds of the younger men assembled around him, some of its patriotic lessons. It was too good an invitation to neglect, for he could dwell upon the advice "to be-

ware of sectional division, to beware of demagogues, to beware of the consequences of the spirit of disunion."

It was an extraordinary company which he found in the Senate,—upon his return to the chamber—composed as it was of men who had been much to the country, or were later destined to figure prominently in its history. Some seemed to have come for the nation's funeral ; some to attend its rebirth. The great triumvirs met here for the last time. Calhoun, after leaving Tyler's cabinet, had been returned to the Senate in 1845, and would die in harness in a few months. Webster had returned in the same year and would remain until, after Taylor's death, Fillmore recalled him to the State Department. Benton was in his place, and in looking around him, Clay could see the faces of Willie P. Mangum, Sam Houston, from the new state of Texas ; John M. Berrien, the veteran of Georgia ; William R. King, of Alabama ; Jefferson Davis, Lewis Cass, Henry S. Foote, Hunter and Mason of Virginia ; Butler, who had three years before become Calhoun's colleague from South Carolina ; Soulé of Louisiana, Stephen A. Douglas and John Bell ; Thomas Corwin from Ohio, and inflexible Northern leaders like John P. Hale, William H. Seward and Salmon P. Chase. No similar group of men were ever gathered together in any legislative hall upon this continent, before or since.

The question of compromise engaged Clay's attention by day and by night. He had many conferences with the leaders, and was by no means certain of success. On January 24, 1850, he wrote to James

Harlan : "Slavery here is the all-engrossing theme, and my hopes and my fears alternately prevail as to any satisfactory settlement of the vexed question. I have been anxiously considering whether any comprehensive plan can be devised and proposed to adjust satisfactorily the distracting question. I should not, however, offer any scheme unless it meets my entire concurrence."¹

Five days later, on January 29th, Clay offered his plan to the Senate, in the form of eight resolutions :

"It being desirable, for the peace, concord and harmony of the Union of these states, to settle and adjust amicably all existing questions of controversy between them, arising out of the institution of slavery, upon a fair, equitable and just basis, therefore,

"1st. Resolved, that California, with suitable boundaries, ought, upon her application, to be admitted as one of the states of this Union without the imposition by Congress of any restriction in respect to the exclusion or the introduction of slavery within those boundaries.

"2d. Resolved, that, as slavery does not exist by law and is not likely to be introduced into any of the territory acquired by the United States from the republic of Mexico, it is inexpedient for Congress to provide by law, either for its introduction into or exclusion from any part of the said territory ; and that appropriate territorial governments ought to be established by Congress in all of the said territory, not assigned as the boundaries of the proposed state of California, without the adoption of any restriction or condition on the subject of slavery.

"3d. Resolved, that the western boundary of

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 599-600.

the state of Texas ought to be fixed on the Rio del Norte, commencing one marine league from its mouth, and running up that river to the southern line of New Mexico; thence with that line eastwardly, and so continuing in the same direction to the line established between the United States and Spain, excluding any portion of New Mexico, whether lying on the east or west of that river.

“4th. Resolved, that it be proposed to the state of Texas that the United States will provide for the payment of all that portion of the legitimate and *bona fide* public debt of that state contracted prior to its annexation to the United States. [Here follow conditions and specifications.]

“5th. Resolved, that it is inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, while that institution continues to exist in the state of Maryland without the consent of that state, without the consent of the people of the District, and without just compensation to the owners of slaves within the District.

“6th. But resolved, that it is expedient to prohibit within the District the slave-trade, in slaves brought into it from states or places beyond the limits of the District, either to be sold therein as merchandise, or to be transported to other markets without the District of Columbia.

“7th. Resolved, that more effectual provision ought to be made by law, according to the requirement of the Constitution, for the restitution and delivery of persons, bound to service or labor in any state, who may escape into any other state or territory in the Union.

“8th. Resolved, that Congress has no power to prohibit or obstruct the trade in slaves between the slaveholding states; but that the admission or exclusion of slaves, brought from one into another of

them, depends exclusively upon their own particular laws.”

In introducing these resolutions, Mr. Clay asserted that all taken together in combination they proposed “an amicable arrangement of all questions in controversy between the free and the slave states, growing out of the great question of slavery.” It was, he said, “a great national scheme of compromise and harmony.” His remarks were in his most pacificatory spirit. They were addressed to North and South. He appealed especially to the men of the Northern states because they were greater “in point of numbers,” and he continued happily, “greatness and magnanimity should ever be allied.” On their side they had “an abstraction, a sentiment,” noble it might be, if it were rightly directed. On the other side there was property to be sacrificed ; there were homes and families in danger from servile insurrections and race wars. “In the one scale then,” he concluded, “we behold sentiment, sentiment, sentiment alone ; in the other, property, the social fabric, life, and all that makes life desirable and happy.”¹

It was Clay’s wish, he said, that the senators should consider his proposals calmly, in the spirit in which he had thought them out and offered them ; but expressions of angry opinion immediately ensued. Foote, Mason, Jefferson Davis and others arose in a far from pleasant mood. To Davis, who insisted upon an extension of the line of the Missouri Compromise to the Pacific Ocean, Clay said in reply :

¹ *Last Seven Years*, pp. 122-123.

"I am reminded of my coming from a slave state. I tell the senator from Mississippi [Davis], and I tell the senator from Virginia [Mason], that I know my duty, and that I mean to express the opinions I entertain, fearless of all mankind. . . . And now, sir, coming from a slave state, as I do, I owe it to myself, I owe it to truth, I owe it to the subject to say that no earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure for the introduction of slavery where it had not before existed, either north or south of the Missouri Compromise line. Coming as I do from a slave state, it is my solemn, deliberate and well-matured determination that no power, no earthly power shall compel me to vote for the positive introduction of slavery either south or north of that line. Sir, while you reproach and justly, too, our British ancestors for the introduction of this institution upon the continent of America, I am for one unwilling that the posterity of the present inhabitants of California or New Mexico shall reproach us for doing just what we reproach Great Britain for doing to us. If the citizens of those territories choose to establish slavery, and if they come here with constitutions establishing slavery, I am for admitting them with such provisions in their constitutions; but then it will be their own work and not ours; and their posterity will have to reproach them and not us for forming constitutions allowing the institution of slavery to exist among them. These are my views, sir, and I choose to express them; and I care not how extensively or universally they are known."¹

¹ *Globe*, Vol. 21, Part I, p. 249.

Clay's proposals were now fairly before the Senate and the country. Crowds assembled in the Capitol to hear the debates. Clay himself appeared in a memorable speech, covering two days, February 5th and 6th. His health was not good. He was separated from the kind attentions of Mrs. Clay, and subjected to the inconveniences and discomforts of life in a lodging-house. He had carefully prepared himself for the occasion and was accompanied to the Capitol by Rev. Dr. Van Arsdale, who afterward told of the great statesman's debility. As they reached the Capitol steps Clay said :

"Will you lend me your arm, my friend ? for I find myself quite weak and exhausted this morning."

Frequently they were obliged to stop that he might recover his breath. He had a disagreeable cough.

"Mr. Clay, had you not better defer your speech ?" Dr. Van Arsdale remarked. "You are certainly too ill to exert yourself to-day."

"My dear friend," answered Clay, "I consider our country in danger, and if I can be the means in any measure of averting that danger, my health or my life is of little consequence."

The Senate chamber was thronged with spectators and auditors from distant cities, women as well as men. Clay rose amid an outburst of applause, and this was the sign for a great shout from the crowd without, hopeless of getting in ; it was, therefore, a considerable time before the orator could go on with any prospect of being heard. It was an extraordinary scene, even when account is taken of

Clay's many extraordinary receptions by popular audiences. It was in truth "a vast assemblage of beauty, grace, elegance and intelligence," as the speaker himself said in beginning his speech on the second day. Again to hear this polished orator of an age which was rapidly going by, was rightly esteemed a rare opportunity. He began in a low tone, faltering by reason of his ill-health and his natural emotions. "I have witnessed many periods of great anxiety, of peril and of danger, even, to the country," said he, "but I have never before arisen to address any assembly so oppressed, so appalled, so anxious." His moods and tones were well measured to the subject and the time. There were none of those biting tongues of fire in his speech with which he had scourged Jackson, or later Calhoun and the faithless Tyler. It was the mellow voice of age, charitable, peace-loving, conciliatory, keyed to all the fearful responsibilities of a serious hour.

He covered each one of his resolutions in his argument, and made friends for them. Members from time to time interposed motions to adjourn, but he insisted that he was able to proceed, and on the second day did bring his argument to the end, in an eloquent plea for sectional concord. He pictured the horrors of civil war which would inevitably follow any attempt at a dissolution of the Union. Such a dissolution and war are, he said with what truth later events were needed to disclose, "identical and inseparable." They are "convertible terms." "Such a war too as that would be, following the dissolution of the Union!" he exclaimed

with awful prophecy. "Sir, we may search the pages of history and none so furious, so bloody, so implacable, so exterminating from the wars of Greece down, including those of the Commonwealth of England and the Revolution of France—none, none of them raged with such violence or was ever conducted with such bloodshed and enormities, as will that war which shall follow that disastrous event—if that event ever happens of dissolution."

He announced his principles on this subject in unmistakable terms :

"I am directly opposed to any purpose of secession, of separation. I am for staying within the Union and defying any portion of this Union to expel or drive me out of the Union. I am for staying within the Union and fighting for my rights—if necessary with the sword—within the bounds and under the safeguard of the Union. I am for vindicating these rights; but not by being driven out of the Union rashly, and unceremoniously by any portion of this confederacy. Here I am within it, and here I mean to stand and die; as far as my individual purposes or wishes can go—within it to protect myself and to defy all power upon earth to expel me or drive me from the situation in which I am placed."

He closed with this eloquent appeal :

"I conjure gentlemen,—whether from the South or the North—by all they hold dear in this world,—by all their love of liberty,—by all their veneration for their ancestors,—by all their regard for posterity—by all their gratitude to Him who has

bestowed upon them such unnumbered blessings—by all the duties which they owe to mankind and all the duties they owe themselves—by all these considerations, I implore them to pause—solemnly to pause—at the edge of the precipice before the fearful and disastrous leap is taken in the yawning abyss below, which will inevitably lead to certain and irretrievable destruction. And finally, Mr. President, I implore as the best blessing that Heaven can bestow upon me upon earth, that, if the direful and sad event of the dissolution of the Union shall happen, I may not survive to behold the sad and heartrending spectacle.”

When he had ended this supreme effort, men crowded about him to take his hand, and women came up to kiss him, so deeply moved were they by the appeal. It seemed a sublime moment in the history of the country and Clay was the central figure upon the stage. Never had he appeared so grand. He had been the darling of his friends. He was now almost their god.

On February 14th, Senator Foote, Davis's colleague from Mississippi, made a motion that Clay's resolutions and all pending questions bound up with slavery should be referred to a select committee of thirteen. Other resolutions appeared, notably a series brought forward by Bell of Tennessee. There ensued long and acrimonious debates upon all the various subjects in dispute between the two sections.

In response to Senator Foote, Clay made these notable remarks on February 14th :

“It is totally unnecessary for the gentleman to remind me of my coming from a slaveholding state.

I know whence I come, and I know my duty, and I am ready to submit to any responsibility which belongs to me as a senator from a slaveholding state. Sir, I have heard something said on this and a former occasion about allegiance to the South. I know no South, no North, no East, no West to which I owe any allegiance. I owe allegiance to two sovereignties, and only two: one is the sovereignty of this Union, and the other is the sovereignty of the state of Kentucky. My allegiance is to this Union and to my state; but if gentlemen suppose they can exact from me an acknowledgment of allegiance to any ideal or future contemplated confederacy of the South, I here declare that I owe no allegiance to it; nor will I, for one, come under any such allegiance if I can avoid it."

In a running debate in the Senate, on February 20th, charged with inconsistency of conduct on the slavery question, Mr. Clay said:

"From the earliest moment when I could consider the institution of slavery, I have held and I have said from that day down to the present, again and again, and I shall go to the grave with the opinion, that it is an evil, a social and political evil, and that it is a wrong, as it respects those who are subject to the institution of slavery. . . . I desire the sympathy of no man, the forbearance of no man; I desire to escape from no responsibility of my public conduct on account of my age, or for any other cause. . . . Ready to express my opinions upon all and every subject, I am determined to do so, and no imputation, no threat, no menace, no application of awe or terror to me will

be availing in restraining me from expressing them. None, none whatever."

Calhoun, dying as he was, too far into the next world to speak to this, was led into the Senate while his plan of compromise and peace was added to the general sum. Webster joined in the debate on March the 7th, a date which has ever since attached to his speech, so remarkable as a bid for the favor of the South. Treason it seemed to be to his New England friends. Appearances favored the success of Clay's plan, in spite of the acerbity of the public mind. For the moment the tide of Abolition in the North a little receded, fearful of the pictured consequences. The South also curbed its hot passions.

On February 2d Clay wrote to Daniel Ullman : " I am very glad to find that my movement to compromise the slavery question is approved. The timid from the North hesitate, and the violent from the South may oppose it, but I entertain hopes of success." He again urged the holding of public meetings in the North, recommending that his name should not be mentioned in connection with them. They should seem to be local and spontaneous assemblages of the people. On February 15th he again wrote to Mr. Ullman concerning his scheme of adjustment : " Although I cannot positively say so, I entertain strong hopes that it will furnish the basis of concord and a satisfactory accommodation."

Some disturbance of the pleasant feeling, to which Clay desired to effect a return, was created by President Taylor. He, like Jackson, had a military

view of his office and a slaveholder though he was, had been taught to regard all mumbling about disunion as treason. If this was the purpose of these Southerners, he said, they should be dealt with by law as they deserved, and executed.

The younger anti-slavery men in the Senate, like Seward and Chase, the former with his "higher law" speech, also added nothing which was calculated to increase the calm of the South. To James Harlan, Mr. Clay wrote, on March 16th: "The all-engrossing subject of slavery continues to agitate us and to paralyze almost all legislation. My hopes are strong that the question will ultimately be amicably adjusted, although when and how cannot be clearly seen."

Thus hope continued to be felt, but no marked progress was made until Foote's motion for the appointment of a committee of thirteen was renewed, and this committee with six senators from the North and six from the South, with Clay as the thirteenth at its head, on April 19th, was commissioned to begin its task of finding some plan of settlement. To these thirteen men came the entire confused mass of proposals and suggestions, by which the Senate and the country at large had been regaled, during the past months. On May 8th Clay and his colleagues reported three bills. The first, soon called the "Omnibus Bill," provided for the admission of California; the organization of territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah without slavery restrictions; and the adjustment of the boundary between New Mexico and Texas. The second was a fugitive slave law; while the third would prohibit

the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Together they covered all the essential points in Mr. Clay's original resolutions.

Scarcely any one seemed to be pleased with the report and it was a basis of further prolific argument. On May 13th Mr. Clay himself took up the report in a long and carefully prepared speech, comparable in many ways with that which he had delivered in February. He was now in somewhat better health and called upon all his remarkable oratorical resources. He believed that the signs improved :

"I am happy to be able to recognize what all have seen, that since the commencement of the session a most gratifying change has taken place. The North, the glorious North, has come to the rescue of this Union of ours. She has displayed a disposition to abate in her demands. The South, the glorious South—no less glorious than her neighbor section of the Union, has also come to the rescue. The minds of men have moderated ; passion has given place to reason everywhere."

"I do not despair ; I will not despair that the measure will be carried," he said as he concluded his speech, "and I would almost stake my existence, if I dared, that if these measures which have been reported by the Committee of Thirteen were submitted to the people of the United States tomorrow, and their vote were taken upon them, there would be nine-tenths of them in favor of the pacification which is embodied in that report."

Whether or not this would have been so Clay knew not better than many others. There was un-

questionably a very deep anxiety for some scheme of concord, if it should be possible to find one.

It was necessary in his work of pacification for Clay to oppose President Taylor's policy, which called for the immediate admission of California as a free state, and the opening of a way that seemed to pledge Utah and New Mexico to the anti-slavery cause also. In speaking against Taylor's desire to bring in California at once by a separate bill, Clay, on May 21st, made his famous allusions to the five "bleeding wounds," which he indicated on his outstretched hand. "What is the plan of the President?" he exclaimed. "Is it to heal all these wounds? No such thing. It is only to heal one of the five and to leave the other four to bleed more profusely than ever by the sole admission of California, even if it should produce death itself. I have said that five wounds are open and bleeding. What are they? First, there is California; there are the territories, second; there is the question of the boundary of Texas, the third; there is the fugitive slave bill, the fourth; and there is the question of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, fifth."

It was the occasion for Benton to say that Clay could have found more bleeding wounds if he had had more fingers on his hand. These two men who had once been friends, and then during the Jackson *régime* were so bitterly opposed to each other, were now united in the work of endeavoring to maintain the Union which they both loved. Nevertheless, they coöperated under a kind of armed neutrality. On June 13th, for instance, Benton accused

Clay of "lecturing" the senators, who were all, he said, above thirty years of age, the limit prescribed by the Constitution. Clay, when his turn came, retorted cleverly amid much laughter: "Now with respect to lecturing the Senate, it is an office which I have never sought to fill. There are many reasons why I do not like to do it. In giving a lecture, the person lecturing ought to have some ability to impart instruction, and the person to whom it is addressed should have the capacity of receiving it. In this case, as between the senator and myself, both of these conditions are wanting. Therefore I do not aspire to the office of a lecturer."

Clay was in the midst of every discussion of the slavery question. He complained often of the debilities of age, but when spoken of they seemed to make his discourses the more impressive. It is computed that in this debate he was on his feet no less than seventy times. His activity was astounding. He was in complete control of the situation at a period when the Senate had never held so many adroit, active, vigorous leaders. It was his policy to husband his resources by remaining at home when the one great question was not under discussion, but it seemed to be almost constantly in the foreground. Yet he was very ill and the strain of the contest wore upon him as the session went on, day by day, through the hot summer. Filibustering policies, which he deprecated, were adopted and the sight of the old statesman moving that the Senate should meet at an earlier hour in the morning and give more time to the great work in hand, was one to be remembered. He was feeding his life out, inch

by inch, in his patriotic endeavor to restore the harmony of the republic.

The Nashville Convention of June met and dissolved without coming to those dread conclusions which some in the South had hoped for and many, both North and South, had feared. On the 9th of July President Taylor died suddenly, after a short illness, and the Vice-President, Millard Fillmore, succeeded to his place. Both of these events strengthened Clay's position in reference to the Compromise. The cabinet was reorganized, with Webster in the State Department; the administration was now friendly and willing to follow a middle course.

On July 22d, nearly six months after he had introduced his resolutions, the time came for his closing speech upon the report of the committee of thirteen. This was a general review of the debate. It was another great oration, taxing Clay's mental powers and his physical strength, but it was finished with entire credit to him, and with advantage to the cause, which he pursued with so much devotion. Including the interruptions of those who rose to make or answer objections, it consumed a day. Though it breathed the spirit of conciliation, it was full of vigorous denunciation of the ultraists, for it was these who, as Clay well understood, were the obstacles to the fruition of his plans. He spoke of the Abolitionists, on the one hand, as a "fanatic, desperate band"—"men who if their power was equal to their malignity would seize the sun of this great system of ours, drag it from the position in which it keeps in order the whole planetary bodies of the universe, and replunge the world in chaos

the prolonged contest for its enactment in a number of speeches in the first weeks of September. For instance, he must combat the statement of Senator Hunter of Virginia, as to the blessings of the African slave trade, which Mr. Clay said had met "with the almost unanimous detestation of mankind." He did not bandy words in explaining to the Southern leaders the difference between a law to abolish the slave trade and a law to abolish slavery itself, for which the Abolitionists also asked. He again suggested that if the gentlemen who opposed the measure "would be less liable to take alarm upon the slightest circumstance, and not be dreading every possible occurrence lest it should touch the particular institution" which they cherish so much, they would, in his belief, "add safety and security to that institution itself."

This bill, too, passed at length and the Compromise of 1850, after not dissimilar struggles in the other house, was complete. This remarkable session of Congress finally adjourned on September 30th and Clay was enabled to return to "Ashland," where, as he wrote his son Thomas, on September 6th, while he was still held at Washington by the exactions of senatorial service, "I desire to be more than I ever did in my life."

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST TWO YEARS

It was Clay's sincere hope that the Compromise would apply to the nation's open wound, the healing influences which he believed the great measure to contain. He did not think that the return of health, composure and good feeling would be instant. But he had lived through the Compromises of 1821 and 1833, and he thought that, as after those two accommodations, better counsels would soon come to prevail. Some "ultra-Abolitionists" might "continue to agitate"—that would be "human nature." "The disappointed party are always mortified, vexed and irritated," said he, "and the successful party should bear with a great deal. But the people of the country at large, the people of the United States are satisfied with this series of measures. And I venture to say that, although here and there a voice may be raised to excite and agitate, the great mass of the people everywhere rejoice and are glad that these questions have been settled."¹

Clay, of course, as we know to-day, erred in his judgment, but he erred with entire sincerity. He saw that the old balance between the free and the slave states must cease; that slavery, for which he had no love, would probably at some time, in some way, succumb. Meantime, come what might, it

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, p. 590.

was his wish to keep the sections, in as much harmony as possible, within the Union. To that end he put forth every energy, and if the country could have gone on without a clash of arms, his would still seem to be, as it was before that event, one of the greatest names in our public life. The war came to disturb our view of the men who in Clay's age gave their all to avert it, making way in popular interest for Lincoln and those whose service consisted in its successful prosecution. It was Clay's wish, as he told the Southern hotspurs, during the great debate upon the Compromise, not to live to witness this "heartrending" spectacle, and he was spared that distress.

In the middle of December, 1850, he was again in Washington, ready to attend upon the short session of Congress. His relations with President Fillmore were, as he said, "perfectly friendly and confidential." He and Webster sat side by side at Jenny Lind's concert, and renewed their old Whig friendships on many occasions. In the hope of contributing to the popular calm, which the Compromise was slow to restore, a declaration and pledge was framed for general circulation. It was signed by forty-four prominent members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Clay's name leading the number. It ran as follows :

"The undersigned members of the Thirty-first Congress of the United States, believing that the renewal of sectional controversy upon the subject of slavery would be both dangerous to the Union, and destructive of its peace, and seeing no mode by which such controversy can be avoided, except by

a stout adherence to the settlement thereof effected by the Compromise passed at the last session of Congress, do hereby declare their intention to maintain the said settlement inviolate, and to resist all attempts to repeal or alter the acts aforesaid, unless by the general consent of the friends of the measure, and to remedy such evils, if any, as time and experience may develop. And, for the purpose of making this resolution effective, they further declare that they will not support for the office of President, or Vice-President, or senator, or of representative in Congress, or as member of a state legislature, any man of whatever party who is not known to be opposed to the disturbance aforesaid ; and to the renewal, in any form, of agitation upon the subject of slavery hereafter."

" Washington, January 22, 1851."

It was not a very sound or substantial peace which needed the pledges of citizens to sustain it. In the South, the echoes of the Nashville Convention still reverberated ; in the North the free negroes were running in fright from the "man-hunters" of the Fugitive Slave Law, while the Abolitionists daily grew in determination and strength.

Clay continued to denounce them impartially :— the Northern disunionists, as he regarded them, on the one hand, by whom he was brought to account by members like Hale and Chase ; and the Southern disunionists on the other, whose leading spokesman was Rnett, now sent to the Senate by South Carolina as a reward for his rebellious utterances. They were alike engaged in the work of trying to defeat the purposes of the Compromise. The Shadrach case, involving the rescue of a fugitive slave by a mob in Boston from the hands of a deputy marshal,

who designed to carry him back to the South, called out a proclamation and a message from President Fillmore, and excited debates in Congress in which Clay took an active part with his old skill and fervor.

But it was a fruitless exercise, and it was all, as he too well realized, a cry for peace when, yet at least, there was no peace. It was his desire to bring the Senate back to the old Whig policies; so he spoke as in the past, on such subjects as the tariff and internal improvements, though with little success, and the session came to an end.

Mr. Clay's cough did not grow better and when the Senate adjourned in March, he contemplated returning home by way of Cuba and New Orleans. This was especially urged upon him because of the condition of the Cumberland Road, at that season of the year almost impassable for horse or man. He sailed from New York for the softer Caribbean airs and was in "Ashland" again in April, "highly gratified" with his visit to that "delightful island," which was his description of Cuba. However, he gained little. On the way he wrote to his son James, who had lately returned from the mission to Lisbon, a post which his father had been able to secure for him, that he was "much reduced and enfeebled." "I must get rid of the cough," he said, "or it will dispose of me." He eagerly looked forward to the warm weather of summer hoping that it would restore him to comfort and strength. His friends still had the wish to make him the Whig leader in the presidential campaign of 1852, but he discouraged the movement.

To James Harlan, in 1850, Mr. Clay wrote: "It would be great folly in me at my age, with the uncertainty of life, and with a recollection of all the past, to say now that I would under any contingencies be a candidate. . . . I have already publicly declared that I entertained no wish or expectation of being a candidate, and I would solemnly proclaim that I never would be, under any circumstances whatever, if I did not think that no citizen has a right thus absolutely to commit himself."¹

To a friend who, in April, 1851, condoled with him over the nomination of General Taylor in 1848, he said that "it had now for him no other than an historical interest." Had he been the nominee, he was confident that he would have secured every electoral vote given to Taylor, and Ohio certainly and Indiana possibly, besides. His majority in Pennsylvania would have exceeded Taylor's.²

In June, 1851, he wrote to his friend Daniel Ullman, of New York, to say that he had not changed his mind on the subject of a further candidacy. "Considering my age, the delicate state of my health, the frequency and the unsuccessful presentation of my name on former occasions, I feel an unconquerable repugnance to such a use of it again. I cannot, therefore, consent to it. I have been sometimes tempted publicly to announce that under no circumstances would I yield my consent to be brought forward as a candidate. But I have been restrained from taking that step by two considerations. The first was that I did not see any such general allusion to me, as a suitable person for the

¹ *Private Correspondence*, pp. 605-606.

² *Ibid.*, p. 615.

office, as to make it proper that I should break silence and speak out ; and the second was that I have always thought that no citizen has a right to ostracize himself, and to refuse public service under all possible contingencies."

He thought it quite clear that a Democrat would be elected in the ensuing year. As for him, if the choice must fall to a Democrat, he would prefer General Cass, who was in his opinion quite as able, quite as firm and possessed of "much more honesty and sincerity than Mr. Buchanan." Another question was coming forward in spite of the Compromise. It would involve "the right of any one of the states of the Union upon its own separate will and pleasure to secede from the residue, and become a distinct and separate power. . . . For my own part I utterly deny the existence of any such right, and I think an attempt to exercise it ought to be resisted to the last extremity ; for it is, in part, a question of union or no union."

Still plainer were his words in a letter from "Ashland" to Thomas B. Stevenson on May 17, 1851 :

"You ask what is to be done if South Carolina secedes. I answer unhesitatingly that the Constitution and laws of the United States must continue to be enforced there with all the power of the Union, if necessary. Secession is treason ; and if it were not—if it were a legitimate and rightful exercise of power—it would be a virtual dissolution of the Union. For if one state may secede, every state may secede ; and how long in such a state of things could we be kept together ? Suppose Kentucky

were to secede? Could the rest of the Union tolerate a foreign power in their very bosom? There are those who think the Union must be preserved and kept together by an exclusive reliance upon love and reason. That is not my opinion. I have some confidence in this instrumentality; but depend upon it, that no human government can exist without the power of applying force, and the actual application of it in extreme cases."

The Compromise needed Clay's voice in its support in all parts of the Union, but he was unable to respond to the calls upon him. A committee of citizens of New York urgently invited him to visit that state. He sent them a letter asking for a concurrence in the principles of the Compromise, including the Fugitive Slave Law, which was a part of the whole. There must be good faith in the enforcement of that measure in order to make certain of the adherence of the South. But he did not neglect the radicals, the nullifiers and seceders of that section who were also so much at fault. Indeed, they were the principal objects of his attention. If they made any attempt to execute their theories, he repeated that "the power, the authority and the dignity of the government ought to be maintained, and resistance put down at every hazard."

After dwelling upon the excellencies of the government under the Union, he continued: "To revolt against such a government for anything which has passed would be so atrocious, and characterized by such extreme folly and madness, that we may search in vain for an example of it in human annals. We can look for its prototype only (if I

may be pardoned the allusion) to that diabolical revolt which, recorded on the pages of Holy Writ, has been illustrated and commemorated by the sublime genius of the immortal Milton."

As the time for the opening of the next Congress approached, Mr. Clay's health was not sensibly better, but he went to Washington in December, 1851, returning to his rooms at the National Hotel. Horace Greeley came to speak of the asperities of the Fugitive Slave Law, which Clay sincerely regretted, and which he would have fought to exclude, if he had not been absent at Newport when the bill was passed by the Senate. Louis Kossuth, who was brought over in a United States man-of-war to receive much public attention, also visited Clay, remembered by the Hungarian patriots as the friend of the South Americans and of struggling Greece. The old statesman had been mellowed by time and experience, and he spoke cautiously. Sympathy he did not grudge the Hungarians, but he saw the futility, danger and wrong of holding out the prospect of anything more. He spoke of the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon, on December 2, 1851, and in the light of this event despaired of "any present success for liberal institutions in Europe." "Far better is it for ourselves, for Hungary and for the cause of liberty," he continued, "that, adhering to our wise, pacific system and avoiding the distant wars of Europe, we should keep our lamp burning brightly on this Western shore, as a light to all nations, than to hazard its utter extinction amid the ruins of fallen and falling republics in Europe."

At this session he was able to visit the Senate

chamber only once, when he made a few remarks on an unimportant topic. On Christmas Day, 1852, he wrote to his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Thomas H. Clay, urging his family not to feel alarmed as to his condition. / If there were a turn for the worse, he would immediately notify them by telegraph. He had all that he could need,—tempting food, kind friends and expert medical attention, which, however, failed to relieve the cough that racked his frame and enfeebled him. There was “no prospect at present of immediate dissolution.” He thought that he would live for some months, “long enough perhaps to reach home once more.”

His friends, in truth, were the soul of devotion to his every wish and requirement, and those who could not come conveyed to him their sympathy by letter, and offered to present themselves to assist in nursing him, or to do whatever his comfort could command. / The winter was a very rigorous one in Washington, and the invalid often missed his daily drives because of the weather, which continued inclement until late in April. His New York friends sent him a handsome medal of pure California gold, containing his head in high relief on one side, and a brief recital of his principal public acts on the other. It was enclosed in a silver case, and was at once a handsome and an interesting tribute which touched him deeply. The Colonization Society adopted a resolution of sympathy and reëlected him its president. On March 14th he wrote to his son James that his condition was “stationary,” except that he could get no sound, refreshing sleep, even with the use of an opiate nightly. He had taken

"immense quantities of drugs" without sensible benefit. The frequent letters which reached him from home afforded him much satisfaction and he had the intention of returning to Lexington, if strength were allowed him, in May or June.

His interest in political matters did not at all abate, and he was conferred with and gave his opinion freely on the subject of the nomination of the Whig party for President, which was to be made in convention at Baltimore, on June 10th. He favored Fillmore as against either Webster or Scott, who were the leading candidates, since he seemed more likely to be acceptable in both sections, and promised to steer the middle course necessary to a maintenance of the principles of the Compromise. "The foundation of my preference is," he wrote, "that Mr. Fillmore has administered the executive government with signal success and ability. He has been tried and found true, faithful, honest and conscientious. . . . I think that prudence and wisdom had better restrain us from making any change without a necessity for it, the existence of which I do not now perceive."

Late in April he telegraphed for his son Thomas, who went to Washington at once, and who soon wrote home that "there is no longer any hope of his reaching Kentucky alive." His father could not talk for five minutes at a time without exhaustion. Yet his mind was clear and his interest in public affairs was unabated. All through these weary days his patience and cheerfulness never failed. "No clouds overhung his future," said John C. Breckinridge in his eulogy in the House after the great

statesman's death. "He met the end with composure and his pathway to the grave was brightened by the immortal hopes which spring from the Christian faith."¹

"Glorious as was his life," said John J. Crittenden, "there was nothing that became him like the leaving it. I saw him frequently during the slow and lingering disease which terminated his life. He was conscious of his approaching end, and prepared to meet it with all the resignation and fortitude of a Christian hero. He was all patience, meekness, and gentleness. These shone around him like a mild, celestial light breaking upon him from another world. And to add greater honors to his age than man can give, he died fearing God."²

"Was there ever man had such friends!" he exclaimed again and again, as tokens of their sympathy and kindness came to him from all sides. The case seemed to defy the intelligent diagnosis of the medical practice of that day. The physicians insisted that the cough was not due to any affection of the lungs. He lingered on into June, when the heat added to his oppression. He gradually grew more and more feeble until it amazed all who were around him how he could live in his condition of extreme debility. Finally, on the morning of June 29th, the end was seen to be near. Thomas Clay was summoned to his bedside. "Sit near me, my dear son," he said, "I do not wish you to leave me for any time to-day." He asked for water. "I be-

¹ Eulogy on Henry Clay in the House of Representatives, June 30, 1852, by John C. Breckinridge.

² "Address on the Life and Death of Henry Clay," delivered at Louisville, September 29, 1852, by John J. Crittenden.

lieve, my son, I am going," he added in a few moments. He took his son's hand, holding it for some time. When he released it, it was discovered that he was dying. Others were summoned to the bedside and at seventeen minutes past eleven life ceased.

He had had many "progresses" through the country in life; he would have another as the corse was conveyed to Kentucky. "Oh, how sickening is the splendid pageantry I have to go through from this to Lexington," wrote Thomas Clay to his wife; and it was a harrowing experience for a son, however well the ceremonies were intended.

The Senate met at twelve o'clock. The news had reached it in the form of a rumor on the street and it immediately adjourned. The House also adjourned, after the reading of the journal. President Fillmore, amid the general tolling of bells, closed the government departments.

The next day cabinet officers, foreign ambassadors, members of the House, and many others made their way to the Senate chamber where the eulogies were to be pronounced. The death was announced by Mr. Clay's colleague, Joseph R. Underwood, who added a tribute, and offered resolutions embodying a proposal that a committee of six be appointed to superintend the funeral in Washington, which was set for the following day, July 1st. He suggested further that another committee of six be named to accompany the remains to the place of sepulture, which Mr. Clay had selected, the cemetery where many of his friends and relations were buried in Lexington, Ky. Speeches from General

Cass, Robert M. Hunter, John P. Hale, William H. Seward, George W. Jones and others followed, whereupon as an additional mark of respect the Senate adjourned. There were similar proceedings in the House.

The next day the members of both houses, the authorities of the city of Washington, several military companies,—all together a large concourse of people,—accompanied the remains from the National Hotel to the Senate chamber where, in the presence of the President of the United States and a very distinguished company, the funeral services were held. Dr. Butler, the chaplain of the Senate, spoke from the text—"How is the strong staff broken and the beautiful rod!" The scenes at Washington were being repeated all over the land. Dr. Butler said :

"For more than a thousand miles—East, West, North and South—it is known and remembered that at this place and hour, a nation's representatives assemble to do honor to him whose fame is now a nation's heritage. A nation's mighty heart throbs against this Capitol, and beats through you. In many cities banners droop, bells toll, cannons boom, funereal draperies wave. In crowded streets and on sounding wharves, upon steamboats and upon cars, in fields and in workshops, in homes, in schools, millions of men, women and children have their thoughts fixed upon this scene and say mournfully to each other, 'This is the hour in which, at the Capitol, the nation's representatives are burying Henry Clay! *Burying Henry Clay!*' Bury the records of your country's history—bury the

hearts of living millions—bury the mountains, the rivers, the lakes, and the spreading lands from sea to sea, with which his name is inseparably associated, and even then you could not bury Henry Clay—for he lives in other lands and speaks in other tongues, and to other times than ours.”¹

After these rites were said, the *cortège* proceeded, by a railway train, appropriately draped in black, to Baltimore, on its way to Lexington, through Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville and Frankfort. At these, and many intermediate places, thousands upon thousands of people assembled to pay their last honors to the great statesman. The newspapers of the land, the pulpit, and secular associations of many kinds throughout these days poured out their tributes, which were everywhere warm, affectionate and full of praise. In Philadelphia, where the arrival was at night, a procession headed by torches was formed, and the iron coffin was borne to the State House to remain until morning under the guard of the Washington Grays, a prominent local military company.

“The whole population here,” it is said, “appeared to be gathered on the line of march, and a deep, reverent, eloquent silence, like the silence of death itself, pervaded the mighty multitude; above it all, rendered more audible and impressive by the contrast, was heard the slow, measured tread of the long funeral train, the tolling bells, the booming

¹ *Obsequies of Henry Clay*, printed by the Common Council of New York.

minute gun and the mournful roll of the muffled drum.”¹

The next day thousands of people viewed the coffin, and the journey was continued by steamboat and railway to New York. There the body of the lamented statesman was deposited in the Governor's Room at the City Hall, to remain over Sunday, which, as it happened, was the Fourth of July. It is said that 100,000 persons at least paid their respects to the dead, all classes coming and going in solemn silence, as though they were attending the funeral of a beloved friend. The departure from New York was effected on Monday morning. As the procession reached the boat, the band played “Should auld acquaintance be forgot,” and there was not a dry eye in the assemblage.

On the way up the Hudson the bell of the steamer constantly tolled, and boats which were met stopped, lowered their flags and sounded their bells. The shores of the river everywhere exhibited flags at half-mast, funeral arches, tolling bells, booming cannon and sorrowing people. Stops were made at some of the towns when the assembled crowds were allowed to come on board to view the coffin.

Thus the *cortège* continued on its way, amid every sign of popular mourning, until it reached Lexington. Women, who everywhere were generally dressed in black, wept and kissed the sable vestments hung around the coffin. Strong men stood beside it and burst into uncontrollable sobs. At sunset on Friday, July 9th, the committee of the Senate formally transferred the remains, by this

¹ *Obsequies.*

time buried in flowers, wreaths and other emblems of the populace's attachment, made of cypress, ivy and laurel, to a committee of citizens. The chairman of the senatorial delegation, Clay's colleague, Mr. Underwood, on this occasion said :

"Our journey since we left Washington has been a continued procession. Everywhere the people have pressed forward to manifest their feelings toward the illustrious dead. Delegations from cities, towns and villages have waited on us. The pure and the lovely, the mothers and daughters of the land, as we passed, covered the coffin with garlands of flowers, and bedewed it with tears. It has been no triumphal procession in honor of a living man, stimulated by hopes of reward. It has been the voluntary tribute of a free and grateful people to the glorious dead."

The speech in reply was made by Chief-Justice Robertson, chairman of the Lexington Committee, whereupon a procession, preceded by a cavalcade of horsemen, was formed. Lighted by torches, it passed under the arches erected in honor of the dead statesman, whose life had brought so much renown to the city and the state, out to "Ashland," where Mrs. Clay and the members of the family awaited its arrival.

The next day, Saturday, July 10th, was set for the funeral. Crowds came from all parts of Kentucky. The services were in charge of Rev. Edward F. Berkley, Rector of Christ Church in Lexington, by whom Mr. Clay had been baptized, and whose church he regularly attended when he was at home. The long procession was then formed and the re-

mains were taken to the spot where they were to sleep in the cemetery west of the city.¹

The large square funeral car was specially designed under the direction of the citizens of Lexington. It was drawn by eight horses, handsomely caparisoned, the cloth covering them being fringed with silver bullion. Each animal was led by a black groom in the funeral costume of the Moors.

The body was temporarily interred in Mr. Clay's lot beside his mother's grave until a suitable tomb could be erected. This came in the form of a Corinthian column one hundred and twenty feet high built of Kentucky granite. To the crypt underneath this imposing shaft the remains were removed and placed in a marble sarcophagus which was the gift of a devoted friend John Struthers of Philadelphia. They now repose there beside Mrs. Clay's, her death having occurred in 1864. On the sarcophagus are chiseled these words from Mr. Clay's farewell address to the Senate :

"I can, with unshaken confidence, appeal to the Divine Arbiter for the truth of the declaration that I have been influenced by no impure purpose, no personal motive, have sought no personal aggrandizement, but that, in all my public acts, I have had

¹ The day before his death he had said to his friend and colleague, Mr. Underwood, who sat beside him : "There may be some question where my remains shall be buried. Some persons may designate Frankfort. I wish to repose in the cemetery in Lexington, where many of my friends and connections are buried."

He had said in his farewell address to the Senate, March 31, 1842 : "When the last scene shall forever close upon us, I hope that my earthly remains will be laid under her [Kentucky's] green sod with those of her gallant and patriotic sons."

a sole and single eye, and a warm, devoted heart, directed and dedicated to what, in my best judgment, I believed to be the true interests of my country."

New York City, which had always been a centre for Mr. Clay's admirers, prepared special memorial ceremonies for July 20th. There was a handsome funeral car bearing a banner of white silk upon which these words were embroidered in black :

"Hearts which glow for freedom's sway
Come and mourn for Henry Clay."

The procession included state and city officials from New York and neighboring states and cities, militia companies and other societies. It moved in fifteen divisions and was the greatest pageant which up to that time had ever taken place in New York. It was marked by much solemnity and an outpouring of sincere feeling on the part of the people. The ceremonies were concluded by an oration in the Park.

Thus Mr. Clay's career came to an end in the midst of his country's trials, which it had been his self-sacrificing task at Washington for the last months of his life to try in some way to allay. Well indeed was it said, upon his funeral day in Lexington, that, "if in future any one section of this great republic should be arrayed in hostility against another," the "Genius of Liberty" should come down "in anguish and in tears, and throwing herself prostrate before his tomb implore the Mighty Ruler of nations . . . to raise up from his ashes another Clay."¹

¹ *Last Seven Years*, p. 449.

May he not seem to have presented himself in the person of Abraham Lincoln? Though Mr. Clay be looked upon as the man of compromise, he never stepped aside as much as a hair's breadth when the safety of the Union was at stake.¹ His ringing speeches of 1850 surpass in devotion to the government the utterances of the Republican leaders who came upon the scene ten years later. Can any one believe for a moment that Clay, if his life had been cast in the later decades of the century, would have abated the least particle of his patriotic faith?

¹ "In the character of Henry Clay, that which will commend him most to posterity is his love of the Union, or, to take a more comprehensive form of expression, his patriotism, his love for his country, his love for his whole country. He repeatedly declares in his letters that on crossing the ocean to serve in a foreign land, every tie of party was forgotten, and that he knew himself only as an American. At home he could be impetuous, swift in decision, unflinching, of an imperative will, and yet in his action as a guiding statesman, whenever measures came up that threatened to rend the continent in twain, he was inflexible in his resolve to uphold the Constitution and the Union."—"A Few Words about Henry Clay," by George Bancroft, *Century Magazine*, July, 1885, p. 481.

CHAPTER XIV

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE personality of every important character in history forms an interesting study, and a knowledge of Henry Clay's is more than usually essential because so much of all that he was was bound up with this personality.

He was preëminently an orator. His influence grew out of his extraordinary gift of public speech. As soon as it was known that he could sway large audiences, winning them to laughter, moving them to tears, arousing them to action, he was destined to occupy a great place in our public life. It is frequently said that this is not an age of oratory, and that results are achieved by more rapid and, as a rule, more brutal processes. If this be taken to mean that it is an age which is not conducive to the development of oratory, the charge is unquestionably true. It is probable that a man with a like gift in this day—if there should be another—would think it not worth his while to devote his talents to such a use. He would seek the greater gains to be reaped from business or law. He would despair of our public life from which the graces and amenities of debate, the reasoning habit and the high standards of constitutional disquisition have largely departed, and he would not train himself for oratory.

While all this is probably true, it is undeniable

that, if such an orator as Henry Clay should appear upon the scene, every one would stop to hear him. Money getting could be postponed and all those interests which absorb Americans of this day, making them impatient in argument and eager to reach their ends rapidly, would be sent to the background, while they listened in rapt admiration to his sonorous sentences and sat in wonderment in the presence of his splendid gifts.

There are many to say that Clay's speeches do not have the vital quality of Burke's, for example, and of those of many of the famous orators of history. It is likely that this judgment often springs from an inadequate reading of Clay, who suffers by comparison because his speeches have never been properly collected and edited, and still more because of the Civil War. As has been said before, this event wholly changed the current of our national life, in a singular way obscuring the reputations of great men who strove to avert it, and who would have kept the nation whole without this trial by fire. The objects and purposes which they had in view, however patriotic, were swept away, meaning little except to students of history, and having been set aside by the absorbing issues of 1860-1865, they cannot be restored to place in public attention or reverence. While Lincoln's utterances, much less numerous, much less finished in some regards than many of Clay's, seem endowed with the immortal quality, may it not be that this result has been arrived at principally because of the subjects to which they relate? Not many claims are made for Lincoln's speeches in the joint debates with Douglas.

Yet it is to these, to the first and second inaugural addresses and the famous speech at Gettysburg that the Lincoln advocate will invariably point.

It is said, of course, that a great part of Clay's power was in his incomparable voice, his facial expression, the movements of his graceful body ; and there is truth in these observations, though he who emphasizes them is in danger of conveying a false impression. These traits of the orator he had in a remarkable degree, but he never relied upon them to the exclusion of the more substantial elements of success. He did not go into a contest without preparation, thinking to win by his natural gifts. He did not fail to read and investigate, because he might have moved the people before him without reading and investigation. There are in existence the most elaborate collections of notes and quotations which he made for some of his principal speeches. When he had not prepared himself he was likely to say so, thus indicating that he did not wish his speech to be judged by the high standards which he long before had set up for himself as an orator, and from which he never willingly made a departure. He had the natural fire, however, of Patrick Henry, with whom, on this ground, he may, perhaps, be more fairly compared than with any other American orator ; and his quickness in repartee and readiness in a running debate with any adversary, constituted him the matchless leader, which he never could have been merely by dint of skill in the studied oration.

James O. Harrison at one time heard Mr. Clay declare that his habit had always been "never to

attempt an argument on any matter of importance without having fully prepared himself." Once during the Tyler administration Senator Rives, of Virginia, launched an attack against Clay, who, when it was concluded, instantly rose for reply. His friends urged him to take time for preparation and made a motion to adjourn. "No," said he, "when I am assailed I am always ready for defense." Thomas F. Marshall, who was then in the House, himself an able orator, used to say that this was "by all odds the greatest speech he had ever heard from Mr. Clay." When Clay had finished John Quincy Adams, who was present, grasped the hand of a friend and exclaimed, "That's the Henry Clay of 1812!" The speech was full of the natural fire of the orator's youth, when by his appeals he had led the nation into its second war of independence.

Another who heard the speech said: "Mr. Clay not only went far beyond my expectations but in that reply surpassed in resistless power all I have ever heard, or have ever conceived of human eloquence."¹

¹Harrison MS. This speech was delivered on August 19, 1841. (Colton, Vol. V, p. 291 *et seq.*) It was on the subject of the veto of the bank bill. In it Mr. Clay originated the phrase "corporal's guard." The statement that this was the best of the orator's speeches must be taken with caution. Each seemed to be his best in the judgment of those who came under its spell. Mr. Clay himself, however, when he was asked which he considered "the most effective and powerful," said: "There is a portion of the speech on the veto of Mr. Tyler of the bank bill, in reply to Mr. Rives, which produced the most electrifying effect of anything I ever uttered. The immediate subject was patriotism."—Mrs. Maury, *Statesmen of America* in 1846, p. 437.

It was said, and may still to-day be said with truth, that Clay's speeches do not exhibit profound learning. John Quincy Adams was accustomed to speak lightly of his reading, and from the Adams standpoint it was in essential ways deficient. It did not cover the ground which must have been traversed by such orators as Daniel Webster or Charles Sumner, but nevertheless Clay's addresses were very far from lacking intellectual appeal. They were heard with satisfaction and profit by Americans of the best mental types. It was from these classes that his party drew its strength. In addition to a full acquaintance with American constitutional, political and economic history, his addresses reflect a general knowledge of the history of ancient and modern government in Europe. Self-educated he was, but he read widely and to good purpose from the point of view of the popular orator, and both in writing and speech he developed a style which was simple, direct and full of charm. No one could truthfully say that he left out of account the minds of his hearers while he aimed to excite their natural feelings. His was an appeal to the reason as well as to the emotions, and if he erred sometimes in his premises, or there were faults in his logic, a re-reading of his speeches will show that his failures were not so much greater than those of other men. Calhoun could taunt him with not having any love for metaphysics, Webster and Adams for no acquaintance with the classics, but in the ability to understand human character and address the common sense he had no superior, as they very well knew.

During the battle of the tricksters in parliamen-

tary rule, to delay and defeat the compromise acts of 1850, Clay expressed his own views respecting debate in a legislative chamber and he was always willing to abide by them. He said: "For myself I differ perhaps from most members of this body, or of any deliberative body, on this subject. I am for the trial of mind against mind, of argument against argument, of reason against reason, and when after such employment of our intellectual faculties, I find myself in the minority, I am for submitting to the act of the majority. I am not for resorting to adjournments, calls for the yeas and nays, and other dilatory proceedings in order to delay that which, if the Constitution has full and fair operation, must inevitably take place."¹

Mr. Harrison's estimates of Clay as a public speaker are of interest, as they come from one who had long and intimate acquaintance with the great orator :

"A notion has been entertained by some who knew but little of his habits, or the loftiness of his temperament or character, that Mr. Clay was but an impulsive orator,—dashing and reckless,—always ready for a speech, a frolic, or a fight, and never taking time for preparation however difficult or weighty the subject, or the occasion. Every such notion is utterly unfounded and untrue. He was exceedingly painstaking in the ascertainment of facts and in his way was one of the most laborious and methodical of men. His way, however, his mode of preparation, somewhat peculiar, was the result of his temperament, his early training, and the pressure of the times under which he was reared.

¹ Colton, Vol. VI, pp. 411-412.

His happy adjustment by nature, of heart and brain, had, under the hard surroundings of his early life, developed in him a manhood, ever fresh, fearless, self-reliant, buoyant and commanding.

“His notions of honor and duty, fashioned and fixed as they were by the sturdy civilization of that period, inspired and instinctively guided him throughout his after life, private as well as public. He, fashioned to that standard in his youth and tested by it, was to be the gentleman without reproach, the patriot without fear. Made up as he was and trained as he had been, he must follow those notions of honor and of duty, however ‘rough hewn’ they were, and however fearful the ordeal through which they might lead him. He feared a taint upon his honor, as he understood honor, far more than he feared death. He never turned aside for any ‘lion in his path.’ On the contrary, ‘the lion in his path’ gave intensity to his purpose, his courage, and his unflinching defiance; and should he fall, as fall he might in some such encounter whether public or private, it should be as a martyr to his own high convictions. His whole career was in harmony with his peculiar temperament. He was so true to his own nature—to himself—that any one well acquainted with the man would have but little difficulty in foretelling how he would act under given circumstances.

“Though one of the frankest of men, he seldom counseled with any one as to his duty, public or private; and seldom wrote any of his speeches. Being at an early age a deputy in the Chancery office at Richmond, he, of course, was thrown not only among business men and business questions of that day, but among the most prominent lawyers and statesmen of Virginia, and at a time when the rights of man and the constitutional powers of the young republic were the absorbing questions, and he must then have contracted not only those exact business habits which characterized him in after

life, but he must have also learned there his first lessons as to the rights of the people, and the duty of their representatives.

“By a happy chance, that was the very school the best suited of all others to the natural tendencies of the youth. Those public questions caught his fancy, they seized his heart and brain, and they must have been the subject of his thoughts whenever he had time for quiet meditation. And those thoughts throbbing in his own brain must have utterance and in words infused with his own fire. He, therefore, was soon in the habit not only of preparing his thoughts for utterance, but of declaiming them when alone in his room, or in the fields, or woods; and this self-discipline in his youth, the habit of preparation, became the fixed habit of his life.

“His first attempts at actual debate were in a debating society at Richmond, made up of youth of about his own age, and as some of them were no doubt well educated, a more thorough preparation by him was then necessary. He knew nothing of the logic, or rhetoric, or philosophy of the schools and had no Roscius or Talma to train his gesticulation, his manner, or his voice. He, however, was familiar with the public questions of the day and had in himself what neither the schools, nor any artificial aid could supply. Nature had trusted him with the key to the human heart and to the common sense of mankind, and he knew intuitively how and when to use it.”

Mr. Harrison continues his observations :

“He seemed to have not only an instinctive consciousness of his own strength but of his own special capacity for leadership, and therefore he would take the lead, whatever the occasion, and as naturally and as gracefully as if it were his birthright.

Few, therefore, if any, ever were surprised that he had taken the place for which nature seemed to have designed him. Indeed, without any appearance of self-assertion on his part, and as if unconsciously to himself, there was a something in his presence and manner that gave to him a somewhat authoritative air and made him, for the time, the central, the commanding figure of the group about him.

“Strangers, persons who never saw him, and who, of course, never felt the potency of his presence and manner, can hardly understand the sort of impression made on others by what was called the magnetism of the man. They would probably infer from my general account of him, that there must have been in his presence and manner some manifestation of arrogance and vanity. There was, however, in his general intercourse no manifestation of either. I think he was as free of vanity as any one I ever knew. Though often with him I never knew him to make himself the hero of his own story, and when questioned, as he occasionally was by me and others, in my presence, in regard to any matter in which he had taken a prominent part, he would merely state the facts: the several steps by which results were reached, and then the naked results, and just as if there was nothing remarkable in his own part in bringing them about.

“But whatever the occasion, or his mood, or whatever the company or the subject of conversation, there was a something in his presence and manner to impress those around him that, within his personality and beneath that manner there was a power, a force of character to be respected, feared, followed and honored. Had this quiet force been arrogantly or ostentatiously displayed, it would have broken the charm that made him so attractive and at the same time so commanding. I never saw an approach to any such display, unless possibly in some stormy debate, when, with a monarch’s voice

and in an attitude of lofty defiance, he would spurn assaults, whether direct, or indirect, upon his principles, his consistency, or his honor.

“Probably, the idea I have attempted above to describe would be more readily seen by an illustration than by my description of it. Though we were often together, and though we talked of any matter, however unimportant, that casually came up, yet I was never with him, whether alone or with company, without feeling I was in the presence of a great power. My supposition was, that this feeling on my part was the result of my personal admiration, or possibly of some peculiarity in my own temperament, but, on inquiry of others less emotional than myself, I found that in every instance the impression made on them by his presence and manner was identical with that made on me.

“The why and the wherefore were a mystery then, and are a mystery now, unless it be that human nature is so organized that the weaker force is instinctively conscious of the fact in the presence of the superior force.

“Mr. Clay’s complexion was very fair. His eyes were gray, and when excited full of fire; his forehead high and capacious and with a tendency to baldness; his nose prominent, very slightly arched and finely formed; his mouth unusually large without being disfiguring; it, however, was so large as to attract immediate notice,—so large indeed, that, as he said, he never learned how to spit. He had learned to snuff and smoke tobacco, and but for his unmanageable mouth, he would probably have learned to chew it also. He also could not whistle. On his trip to Europe, in connection with the negotiation of the Treaty of Ghent, while he was in London there was a demand for Yankee Doodle. The bandmaster did not know the tune, but if some one would whistle it he promised to have it played. Mr. Clay had to decline but he called upon his negro body-servant Aaron, who whistled well, and

the British musicians soon caught up the refrain on their instruments.

“His chief physical peculiarity, however, was in the structure of his nervous system. It was so delicately strung that a word, a touch, a memory would set it in motion. Though his nervous system was thus sensitive, yet his emotions, however greatly excited, were of themselves never strong enough to disturb the self-poise of his deliberate judgment. His convictions of duty were fixed as fate, and yet, as I thought, he was the most emotional man I ever knew. I have seen his eyes fill instantly on shaking the hand of an old friend, however obscure, who had stood by him in his early struggles, and whom, after a long interval, he had suddenly met. I have seen the letter of a grandchild, then residing in a distant state, drop from his hand when reading it aloud to some members of his family,—his eyes were too full of tears to see, and his tongue too full of emotion to utter the touching words. I read the letter. There was not even a suggestion in it to give pain. It was only the loving letter of a child, full of tender messages to her grandmother and to him.

“His sympathies were as wide as human nature, and were alive not only to its struggles and its virtues, but even to its infirmities; in case of any great affliction in the family of a friend or neighbor, his condolence was ever ready, and in a manner and tone of voice almost as tender, and as touching, and as natural as if the affliction were his own.

“This emotional nature, so natural to him and always so naturally shown, was a marked characteristic and a great element of his power over the heart. His magnetic power was the natural result of the lofty, the unmistakably and generously tempered manliness of the man,—the outcrop of the great elements that, combined, made him inevitably what he was.

“The muscles of his face, even in old age, never had any of the rigidity, or leathery appearance, or

toughness, which sometimes accompanies old age. On the contrary, his features were apparently always as tender and as flexible as the features of a child, and expressed as naturally and as readily as do the features of a child the emotion of a moment, whatever the emotion was ; and when in high debate, every muscle, his whole physical structure, would be alive with the lofty passion that was giving fire and force to every thought he uttered.

"I have never seen any one but himself whose whole physical structure so readily and so naturally responded to its own emotions and passions, nor ever heard any voice but his own, that so harmonized with whatever he felt and uttered. Indeed, even when there would seem to be no occasion for any great emotion, or for the display of it, yet if the subject presented issues of great concern to his client, to the public, or to himself, his heart, full of the subject and as if oppressed by its responsibility, would manifest its emotion not only in the preliminary outline of the facts to be considered, but would occasionally manifest its emotion even before he had uttered a word. You would see the emotion in his whole person as he slowly rose to his feet. You would see it in his drooping posture, in the deathly pallor of his face, in his brimful eyes, in the spasmodic twitching of his under lip, and upon the utterance of the first sentence, you would hear the emotion in the touching tones of his magnetic voice. They all harmonized, and naturally, and without effort, with the emotions, passions and utterances of the moment. It was nature visibly at work, and bringing into harmonious action, before your own eyes, all the great elements, mental, moral, and physical, of his nature, and this rare combination of force actively enlisted in high debate, gave his eloquence a naturalness, a concentrated earnestness and impetuosity that for the time was overwhelming."

Much testimony is at hand to corroborate Mr. Har-

rison on the subject of Mr. Clay's voice. It was like some delicately attuned musical instrument, which he could use for the expression of every emotion within the human range, while his control and employment not only of his hands in gesture, but also of other parts of his body, was developed into a fine art.

"No such voice was ever heard elsewhere," wrote Ben Perley Poore. "It was equally distinct and clear, whether at its highest key or lowest whisper; rich, musical, captivating. His action was the spontaneous offspring of the passing thought. He gesticulated all over. The nodding of his head hung on a long neck, his arms, hands, fingers, feet, and even his spectacles, his snuff-box and his pocket handkerchief aided him in debate. He stepped forward and backward, and from the right to the left with effect. Every thought spoke; the whole body had its story to tell and added to the attractions of his able argument."

A striking evidence of his power of making his thoughts speak through his body was given in a meeting held in the public square in Lexington in May, 1843. The address was never published. It was made to repel the attacks directed against him at that time in his own state. He could not rest quietly under them. Although his friends tried to dissuade him from taking notice of the malignant authors of the charges, he sought this opportunity to appear in his own defense. He began :

"Fellow citizens—I am now an *old man*—*quite* an old man." Here he bowed himself very low, as if bent with the burdens of age. "But yet it will be

found," he continued, "that I am not too old to vindicate my principles, to stand by my friends, or to defend myself."

His voice was growing louder each moment and he was elevating himself in the most impressive way as he went on to his climax.

"I feel like an old stag which has been long coursed by the hunters and the hounds, through brakes and briers, and o'er distant plains, and has at last returned to his ancient lair to lay himself down and die. And yet the vile curs of party are barking at my heels, and the bloodhounds of personal malignity are aiming at my throat. I scorn and defy them as I ever did."

As he uttered these concluding words, he extended his frame to its greatest limit, stretched his arms, his hands widely spread, above his head until his tall person seemed twice its normal height. The effect, it is needless to say, was greatly enhanced by the device. He knew how, always, to suit his action to an oratorical situation.

Mr. Clay was never given to quotation from others. As Mr. Winthrop truly says, his own storehouse was so full that he had little need to borrow. When he attempted to repeat even familiar passages, he did it awkwardly and often incorrectly.

"What is it," he asked Senator Evans of Maine one day, "that Shakespeare says about a rose smelling as sweet? Write me down those lines, and be sure you get them exactly right, and let them be in a large, legible hand."

Evans sent to the library for a copy of Shake-

speare to make sure of his ground, and then wrote the lines as he had been directed :

‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.’

When Clay came to the place in his speech at which he wished to make use of the quotation, however, he stumbled over his notes and then unable to find the written words, exclaimed—“A rose will smell the same call it what you will.” His friends had many such anecdotes to tell about him.

His figure was a lasting memory to Mr. Winthrop, as it was to all who ever came into contact with him. “As he sometimes sauntered across the Senate chamber, taking a pinch of snuff out of one friend’s box or offering his own box to another,” says this fine old Massachusetts Whig in his Memoir of the great Kentuckian, “he was a picture of affability and nonchalance. He had the genial, jaunty air of Lord Palmerston, whose peer he would have been as a cabinet minister or in Parliament, had he chanced to have been born an Englishman, or an Irishman, instead of an American.”

Mr. Schurz formed this just estimate of Henry Clay as an orator : “They [his speeches] were the impassioned reasoning of a statesman intensely devoted to his country, and to the cause he thought right. There was no appearance of artifice in it. They made every listener feel that the man who uttered them was tremendously in earnest, and that the thoughts he expressed had not only passed through his brain, but also through his heart. They were the speeches of a great debater, and, as

may be said of those of Charles James Fox, cold print could never do them justice. To be fully appreciated they had to be heard on the theatre of action, in the hushed Senate chamber, or before the eagerly upturned faces of assembled multitudes. To feel the full charm of his lucid explanations and his winning persuasiveness, or the thrill which was flashed through the nerves of his hearers by the magnificent sunbursts of his enthusiasm, or the fierce thunder-storms of his anger and scorn, one had to hear that musical voice cajoling, flattering, inspiring, overawing, terrifying in turn . . . the whole man a superior being while he spoke.”¹

Mr. Clay's personal charm was as great in conversation as upon the platform. Horace Greeley tells of a member of Congress of the opposite party, who refused the offer of an introduction, lest he fall under the spell of the man and be swept away by admiration. It was General Glascock, who had been elected a representative from Georgia during the excitement over the removal of the deposits from the United States Bank.

“General,” said a friend at a reception in Washington, “shall I make you acquainted with Mr. Clay?”

“No, sir,” was the prompt and stern response. “I choose not to be fascinated and moulded by him, as friend and foe appear to be, and I shall therefore decline his acquaintance.”²

A venerable earl in England who was too feeble to come to pay his respects to the American com-

¹ Schurz, Vol. I, pp. 325-326.

² *Homes of American Statesmen*, p. 380.

missioners after the successful negotiation of the Treaty of Ghent, and to whose home they therefore repaired, was subsequently asked which one of the number he preferred.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "I enjoyed them all but I liked the Kentucky man best."

"I have admired and trusted many statesmen," said Horace Greeley. "I profoundly loved Henry Clay. . . . I loved him for his generous nature, his gallant bearing, his thrilling eloquence and his lifelong devotion to what I deemed our country's unity, prosperity and just renown."¹

Charles Dickens, in describing various American statesmen, contented himself when he came to Clay by saying that he was a "perfectly enchanting and irresistible man."²

As has been remarked many times elsewhere in this account of his life, his friends were the most devoted ever found in the train of any public man in American history.³ Ladies would have taken off their cloaks to make a silken way for him in the streets; men would have died cheerfully to have saved his life, or even to have accomplished his elevation to the presidency. They were constantly sending him valuable gifts and other tokens of their attached affections. Few at this day can compre-

¹ *Recollections*, p. 166.

² Forster, *Life of Dickens*, p. 349.

³ Lord Morpeth made an exception for Canning in England. In his *Travels in America* he wrote: "I certainly never met any public man, either in his country or in mine, always excepting Mr. Canning, who exercised such evident fascination over the minds and affections of his friends and followers as Henry Clay. I thought his society most attractive, easy, simple and genial with great natural dignity."

hend how valuable a boon the Cumberland Road was to the people of the Ohio and the Mississippi Valleys at the time it was built. Clay struggled year after year to extend and complete it. In 1820 a monument was placed upon this highway near Wheeling in commemoration of his efforts in its behalf. The front of the base bears this inscription :

“This monument was erected by Moses and Lydia Shepherd as a testimony of respect to Henry Clay, the eloquent defender of national rights and national independence.”

On another side of the stone these words were inscribed :

“Time brings every amelioration and refinement most gratifying to rational man, and the humblest flower freely plucked under the tree of liberty is more to be desired than all the trappings of royalty.

“Anno Domini, 1820.”

No man may fully comprehend all of what there was in this remarkable personality to arouse such sentiments in men and women for whom he had done nothing, whom, in great numbers of instances, he did not know, indeed had not even seen. Perhaps something of the spell could have been communicated to later generations had the inventor of the phonograph contributed his device to the world at an earlier day. What would not now be given for a talking-machine, imperfect a contrivance as it is, which would reproduce the speeches of Washing-

ton, Clay, Webster and Lincoln as they fell from their own lips?

Yet with all these friends Clay had the most malignant enemies. Perhaps this was inevitable. A man of decided opinions, who is always fearless in expressing them, must expect to meet this fate in public life. He is bitterly hated by some for the very reasons that he is dearly loved by others. Clay's enemies, however, feared him and plied their arts behind his back by foul means. The great lie about bargain and corruption was circulated in dark places in the night. No one could be found to stand sponsor for it. It was denied in the most conclusive manner, again and again, only to be brought out by the Jackson party in some new backwoods settlement to bias the minds of ignorant people. Thurlow Weed and the men who accomplished Clay's defeat in the Harrisburg Convention in 1840, and nominated General Harrison, feared to come out into the open. They achieved their objects by subterranean schemes. Clay was not a match for such chicanery. It had not flourished in the age in which he had come forward as a public man. It was not any essential part of the equipment of the "Virginians." For the "trial of mind against mind" he contended consistently, and he had no favors to ask of any one in such a contest.

In an age in which women disturb themselves in regard to the franchise, and assert that their "sex" is deficient in appreciation of political matters, simply because they do not have the opportunities and experiences of men, it is worth while to note the interest with which they pursued the career of

Henry Clay. They flocked to hear his speeches; they read his speeches. No restriction upon their suffrage "rights" interfered with their enjoyment of the proceedings of Congress when he took part in the debates. His words, some one has said, were "like the sweetest notes of the lark in the ears of the whole female sex."

Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith's enthusiasm overflowed whenever she spoke of him. "With his unrivaled and surpassing talents, his winning and irresistible manners," she exclaimed one time in 1831, "what is it he cannot do?"¹

Once when he was visiting at her home during his term as Secretary of State she wrote: "Never did I see this great man (for in native point of mind I never knew his equal) so interesting—nay, fascinating. I had heard of his possessing this power of captivation, which no one who was its object could resist, and I have before seen and felt its influence, but never in the same degree as upon this occasion."

He was one of the most brilliant of conversationalists, and could for hours analyze the characters of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and the early Presidents, and detail the history of their administrations. He punctuated his speeches with original statement and anecdote. He sat upon his "favorite seat on the sofa" in the firelight, or rather was "reclining" there. "How graceful he looked! his face flushed with exercise and his countenance animated with some strong emotion. . . . So interesting was his conversation, so captivating his frank, cordial manner, that I could almost have

¹ *First Forty Years*, p. 325.

said with Mr. Lyon—"I could have listened all night and many nights with delight"—and with Mr. Ward have exclaimed, "What a treat! It is indeed the feast of reason and the flow of soul.""¹

What another woman thought of Clay at a later day is to be found in the recollections of American statesmen, by Mrs. Sarah Mytton Maury. This talented English lady's observations cover 1846.² She saw Clay in retirement at "Ashland." It seemed like "Mount Vernon" to his countrymen and they made their pilgrimages thither in the same spirit. He was undoubtedly "the most popular man in America." Women both in England and the United States she thought naturally conservative, and they were generally Whigs. "A lovely and graceful ornament, the ladies of America," she said, "are the chaplet of roses in which is wreathed the name of Henry Clay."

They all told Mrs. Maury: "You cannot go back to your country without going to 'Ashland.' You never heard such a voice, you never knew such a man in England as our Mr. Clay."

"All the children born in 1845 and 1846 are, I believe, called after him," she observed. "There is a little generation of two-year-old Henry Clays. Some ladies of Ithaca lavished upon me every sort of hospitality and kindness. 'How,' said I on parting, 'shall I repay you for so much goodness?' 'You are going to see Mr. Clay; ask him for an autograph and send it to us; you will have done much more for us than we have done for you.'"

¹ *First Forty Years*, p. 298 *et seq.*

² *The Statesmen of America in 1846*, p. 422 *et seq.*

Mrs. Maury had seen men of "firm and manly minds weep at the recollection of Mr. Clay's defeat in 1844." "If it were possible," however, she continues, "that circumstance has increased his popularity, and has won for him the most unusual and extraordinary attachment throughout the Union that probably ever fell to the lot of any man, except the revered Washington. His character, manners, appearance, voice, nay, even his dress had been minutely described to me long before I saw him; every anecdote of his life is public property; his house, his farm, his domestic circle all belong to society at large, to the country I might say; and many could relate a few words or syllables uttered to them or their friends, or perhaps to indifferent persons, which they had by some fortunate chance caught as they fell from his honeyed lips."

The visit to "Ashland" was no disappointment to Mrs. Maury. She was admitted by an old negro who explained that "Marster" was at home. Mr. Clay himself came at once to assist the guest to alight. When they had gone into the sitting-room, he read her letters of introduction. "You have about five thousand relations in Virginia and Kentucky," he remarked laughing. "Are you going to see them all? I have known many of them and they are all endorsed with virtue."

The visitor spent a number of happy hours in the family. When many were present, Mrs. Clay would say, "Take him into the garden and talk with him there, for I know you wish it, and I will trust him with you."

Then they went into the garden and he pointed

out to the guest the trees which he had planted with his own hands, cut for her "every flower" that she "looked upon or touched," conducted her to his stables to show her his fine cattle and his pets, and spoke to her on subjects of American and English politics. He nearly always "carried in his hand a full-blown rose with a short stem and frequently addressed himself to its perfumed cup."

In reply to an inquiry, he attributed much of his success as an orator to "a voice peculiarly adapted to produce the impressions I wished in public speaking; now its melody, its music is gone." But "all this was said," it seemed to Mrs. Maury, "as if in mockery, in sounds of exquisite sweetness."

A granddaughter with light blue eyes and flaxen hair, almost the image of the old statesman, would climb upon his knees when he sat down and make her way to his shoulder to twine her arms around his neck, play with his hair and kiss his head and face all over. When he walked she clasped his knees. "He called her 'Sophy' in the softest accents ever heard, and she ran away in childish playfulness, so to be called again." When Mrs. Maury left, as he placed her in the carriage, he held both her hands "in the strong grasp of friendship." "Let us trust," said he, "that we may meet again, either here or elsewhere; and send those boys of yours to St. Louis, and let them come to me, and I will do all I can for them, and God in Heaven bless you."

No human being, man or woman, could fail to be fascinated by such a person. His words lingered on

Mrs. Maury's ear, and dwelt in her heart as long as she lived.

The enmities which pursued Mr. Clay through life, when they did not relate to the "corrupt bargain," found expression in attacks upon his private character. Mrs. Maury's, as well as many similar pictures, should dispose of such calumnies in so far as they relate to the gentleness and charm of his domestic relations.

"He has from nature a fund of tenderness and sensibility," wrote Mrs. Smith in 1829. "Never can I forget the tears he shed over his dying infant, as it lay in my lap, and he kneeled by my side. With what deep tenderness did he gaze on it, until unable to witness its last agonies, he impressed a long tender kiss on its pale lips, murmuring out, 'Farewell, my little one,' and left the chamber; and the next morning when obliged to speak to me about the funeral he walked the room for some time, in mournful silence, as if struggling to compose his feelings, so as to be able to give his directions with calmness." ¹

That he played cards for money, especially in his youth; that he raised horses for the race-track; that he was a duelist; and that he owned slaves, were subjects which engaged the attention of his foes. Were we to make a catalogue of the vices of our leading public men, not more than a few of them would be found to be so free from serious reproach on moral grounds. Games of chance were general pastimes in the early history of America, and we are not sufficiently free from their influences

¹ *First Forty Years*, pp. 301-302.

to day to be able to boast of our superior position. The racing of horses was an amusement for every inhabitant of England and America for many generations, and it is by no means certain that it has not advantages over most of our newer forms of sport. Mr. Clay heartily denounced dueling, though in his early life his ardent temperament and the custom of his neighborhood made it difficult to resist it under great provocation.¹ He sincerely denounced slavery, though he continued to own negroes, and as late as 1850 spoke to his son Thomas about purchasing a few more because of the impossibility of hiring labor in Kentucky.

His negroes enjoyed only the kindest treatment. Mrs. Clay did everything for their comfort in illness and old age. Aaron and Charles followed Mr. Clay faithfully on his journeys, and not one at "Ashland" could be persuaded to leave so good a home even after he was emancipated. Clay's friends were constantly making him gifts of all kinds in testimony of their affection, and one in Alabama left him by will twenty-five or thirty slaves. He at once paid their way to New Orleans, put them upon a ship and sent them to Liberia.²

In his last will of July 10, 1851, Mr. Clay made careful stipulations, similar to those which he recommended to the state of Kentucky, concerning the general emancipation of his slaves and their transportation to Africa. Such as were born after

¹ It must be remembered that Abraham Lincoln once went out to fight and for a much smaller matter than any which ever called Henry Clay.

² This fact is mentioned in his speech as president of the American Colonization Society at Washington, 1827.

January 1, 1850, he specified should be free, the males at twenty-eight and the females at twenty-five. For three years prior to this time they should be hired for wages which, forming a fund, should be used to defray the cost of carrying them out of the country. Again, their children should be free at birth and put under a system of apprenticeship until they should reach the age of twenty-one, when they in turn should be deported to Africa. If slaves were sold, he directed that "the members of families shall not be separated without their consent."

It was said during his life, and the statement was repeated after his death, that Mr. Clay was given to over-indulgence in liquors. His friend and executor, Mr. Harrison, absolutely denies it. Mr. Clay was, of course, not a total abstainer at a time when the use of wine was general, if not universal, but that he ever injured his powers by intemperance is impossible to prove. One after another of these charges, made as they were, in the heat of party strife, when we judge Clay by the standards of the community and the time in which he lived, falls to the ground and needs no serious treatment at the hands of his biographers.

It was likewise said that Clay was lacking in religious sentiment and that his thought of such matters came at the last hour. No reader of his speeches can escape the conclusion that he always had great reverence for the God reigning over all; his allusions to the hand of Providence are frequent and bear evidence of flowing from a sincere heart.

Mr. Clay became a communicant of the Episcopal Church in 1847. He had been a pewholder in

Christ Church, Lexington, from the time of his marriage, was a constant attendant there when at home, and was always deeply interested in its welfare. His father-in-law, Colonel Hart, was a member of this church, the first Episcopal church in Kentucky, and a liberal friend to it. Mr. Clay was baptized in the parlor at "Ashland," June 22, 1847, and the rector of Christ Church, the Rev. Edward F. Berkley, who officiated, gave an account of the ceremony. It had been stated that Mr. Clay had been immersed in a pond on his estate, and Mr. Berkley wrote to one who had made inquiry concerning the truth of this report: "I baptized Mr. Clay in his parlor at 'Ashland,' at the same time administering the same ordinance to his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Thomas H. Clay, and four of her children, on the 22d of June, 1847, a few special friends being present. The water was applied by the hand, out of a large cut-glass urn which was numbered among his many rare presents and had been given him by a manufacturer of such wares in Pittsburg. It was said that this was the largest piece of cut glass then in existence. It may interest you to know that in the baptismal service of the Protestant Episcopal Church there are asked certain questions which the candidate is supposed to answer from the book. Seeing that Mr. Clay did not have a Prayer-Book in his hand, I suggested that the use of one might enable him more readily to reply to the questions. He replied, 'I think I shall be able to answer them,' and the readiness with which he answered, and his familiarity with the service gave evidence that he had made it a

personal study and was ready to stand by his declaration."

Mr. Clay then was seventy years old. He had always been interested in religious subjects, but his life was spent amid the turmoil of politics for so many years that he felt the time had not come for the profession of his faith. In the Senate, in 1832, when he recommended a day of fasting and prayer on account of the approach of the Asiatic cholera, he said :

"I am a member of no religious sect, and I am not a professor of religion. I regret that I am not. I wish that I was, and I trust that I shall be. I have, and always have had, a profound regard for Christianity, the religion of my fathers, and for its rites, its usages, and its observances. Among these, that which is proposed in this resolution, has always commanded the respect of the good, and the devout, and I hope it will obtain the concurrence of the Senate."

Many extracts from Mr. Clay's speeches could be given to show his religious sympathy. He always felt and exhibited profound respect for the religious beliefs of others, and his charity extended alike to Catholic and Jew. The only daughter of his beloved daughter, Mrs. Erwin, wrote to him of her desire to become a nun, and in reply he said :

"Your happiness, my dear grandchild, has ever been an object of intense anxiety and solicitude to us. If it is to be promoted by the execution of the purpose you have in view, I would not, if I could, dissuade you from it. I have no prejudice against the Catholic religion. On the contrary, I sincerely believe that Catholics who are truly religious are as

sure of eternal happiness in another world as the most pious Protestants. All that I hope is that you will not act on any sudden impulse, or ill-considered and immature resolution, but that you will deliberately, and again and again examine your own heart, and consult your best judgment before you consummate your intention. Write me at Washington, and, in the event of your taking the veil, let us know what provision exists for your support and comfort, and whether any, or what pecuniary aid may be proper, or expedient from your friends."

It was reported that Mr. Clay, in a speech in the Senate, had used the word "Jew" as a term of reproach and the following letter from Solomon Etting, of Baltimore, and Mr. Clay's reply, are of interest :

"Baltimore, July 15, 1832.

"DEAR SIR :

"You know that I am your friend, and, therefore, I write to you freely. Several of the religious societies to which I belong, myself included, feel both surprised and hurt by the manner in which you introduced the expression 'the Jew' in debate in the Senate of the United States, evidently applying it as a reproachful designation of a man whom you considered obnoxious in character and conduct.

"I do not know the person you allude to. The term 'the Jew,' as used by you, is considered illiberal. If therefore you have no antipathy to the people of that religious society, I can readily believe you will have no objection to explain to me, by a line, what induced the expression.

"I am, with respect and esteem,

"Your obt. st.,

"SOL. ETTING.

"HON. H. CLAY,

"U. S. Senate, Washington."

In answer to this letter Mr. Clay wrote :

“ Washington, 16th July, 1832.

“MY DEAR SIR :

“I regret extremely to perceive from your letter of yesterday that you have thought it possible that a remark of mine applied to a subordinate officer of the customs, who was in attendance here, was liable to an unfavorable interpretation in respect to Jews in general. Nothing could have been further from my intention. The remark was intended to describe a person, and not a nation. It was strictly, moreover, defensive. Some of my friends who were in the Senate had been attacked by General Hayne, as I thought rudely, for the assistance which they had rendered about the tariff.

“In reply, I said that they were not the only persons attending on that object, but that on the other side Moses Myers (or Myers Moses, for I do not know his proper designation) had been summoned by the Secretary of the Treasury, and might be seen daily skipping about the House, and I proceeded to describe his person.

“I judge men, not exclusively by their nation, religion, etc., but by their personal conduct.

“I have always had the happiness to enjoy the friendship of many Jews, among whom one of the Gratzs of Lexington, formerly of Philadelphia, stands in the most intimate and friendly relations to me, but I cannot doubt that there are bad Jews, as well as bad Christians, and bad Mohammedans.

“I hope, my dear sir, that you will consider this letter perfectly satisfactory.

“With great regard,

“I am truly yours,

“H. CLAY.

“SOLOMON ETTING, ESQ.”

In 1849 Mr. Clay was a lay delegate to the Diocesan Convention at Frankfort, and it was said

that "this great and good man entered into the deliberations of the convention with all the interest and animation he was wont to manifest on every subject which concerned the welfare of his fellow men."

Unlike most Kentuckians, Mr. Clay was enabled to go through life without a military title. No one ever called him "Colonel"; he was always Mr. Clay. Being a kind, sympathetic neighbor, he was greatly beloved in Lexington. The interests of the town were very dear to him. For many years he was a trustee of Transylvania University, and at one time was a professor of law in this college which was the "pride and hope of the commonwealth." It was "the first temple of science erected in the wilds of the West" he once wrote his friend Senator Johnston, when bespeaking for it a favor at the hands of Congress. To his sense of propriety and his interest in the University, that institution owed a legacy which came to it in a time of great financial difficulty. Among the wealthy citizens of Lexington was Colonel James Morrison, a friend and client of Mr. Clay, upon whom he called to write his will. After having provided for his family, there was still a large sum of money undevised. Of this Colonel Morrison asked to be allowed to make one of Mr. Clay's sons the legatee, that son having been named for Colonel Morrison. Mr. Clay promptly declined the gift, saying that Transylvania University would be a proper beneficiary. This suggestion was accepted and the pressing needs of the college were thus relieved."

In all business matters Mr. Clay was most method-

ical and, though twice heavily embarrassed from having become surety for others, his credit was never impaired. His uniform custom was to pay a debt as soon as it was incurred, and his style of living was never marred by ostentation. "In this connection," says Mr. Harrison, "it may not be amiss to notice a document, probably the last one ever executed by Mr. Clay, which illustrates more forcibly than any other I have ever seen, not only his exactness in business matters, but his sense of justice and the generosity of his nature in urging the fulfilment of a verbal promise he had made some years before. This document bears no date. His son Thomas, by whom it was written at his father's bedside, and at his dictation, informed me that it was subscribed to only a few days before his death. The document referred to, now before me, is as follows :

" ' Memoranda of H. Clay

" " I leave with you [his son Thomas] a check on Messrs. Corcoran & Riggs for any balance standing to my credit in the books of their bank at the time you present the check. The balance now is about sixteen hundred dollars, but it may be diminished before you have occasion to apply for it.

" " Mr. Underwood will draw from the secretary of the Senate any balance due me there and pay it over to you.

" " Out of these funds I wish you to pay Dr. Hall's bill, the apothecary's bill, and Dr. Francis Jackson's bill, of Philadelphia.

" " Whatever may be necessary to pay those debts, and may be necessary to bear your expenses to Kentucky, had better be appropriated and reserved accordingly, and the balance to be converted in a bank

check on New York which will be safer to carry and more valuable in Kentucky.

“ ‘I have settled with James G. Marshall, my servant, and at the end of this month he will have paid me all that I have advanced him, and I shall owe him two dollars. The deed for his lot in Detroit, which he assigned to me as security for being his endorser on a note in bank, is in my little trunk in your mother’s room in a bundle marked, “Notes and valuable papers.” I wish the deed taken out and delivered to James, as the matter is settled.

“ ‘The Messrs. Hunter who bought my Illinois land, have been very punctual in paying me the purchase money as it became due heretofore.

“ ‘The last payment of two thousand dollars is due me at Christmas. They have written me that they will come over and pay it, and at the same time receive a pair of Durham calves as a present which I promised them. I wish that promise fulfilled. The heifer I bought from Mr. Hunt, a descendant of the imported cow, Lucretia, I design as one of the animals to be presented.

“ ‘There is a note for upward of a thousand dollars among my papers, in the pocketbook, well secured and payable in New Orleans next November. My executors ought to send it there for collection.

“ ‘H. CLAY.’ ”

Another instance of his conscientious sense of honor in business matters is found in a fact connected with the failure of his son Thomas, while engaged in the manufacture of hemp. The young man owed his father a larger sum than the aggregate of his indebtedness to all other creditors, yet Mr. Clay gave every dollar of his share of the proceeds of the sale of the effects to those creditors.

A part, at least, of Mr. Clay’s power of winning and holding friends was due to his ability to pro-

nounce their names, to remember faces and to utter the apt word or phrase at the right moment.

Hamilton Fish used to recall a happy instance of this kind at a public reception in New York City in 1835. Fish was chairman of the Whig committee appointed to receive the great leader. There was an old Virginian named Hackett who had much political influence in one of the wards of the city. Mr. Fish knew him to be an anti-Clay man and, wishing to conciliate him, brought him up and introduced him by name. Clay in his beautiful voice spoke to the old fellow, who was now compelled to say something.

"Mr. Clay," he remarked awkwardly, "aren't you very tired of shaking hands with so many people?" "Oh, no, sir," Clay replied. "How can I be tired when my fellow citizens have been at such trouble to call upon me? Besides, Mr. Hackett, you must remember that I come from a state where men never tire."

"That's so," said the man, captivated immediately. "Old Virginny never tire."¹

Once during a visit to Mississippi Mr. Clay stopped for a few minutes at a place called Clinton. A crowd gathered around the train and an old man with one eye made his way to the front.

"Don't introduce me," he said, "for I want to see if Mr. Clay will know me."

"Where did I last see you?" asked Mr. Clay, taking the old man's hand.

"In Kentucky," he answered.

"Have you lost that eye since I saw you?"

"Yes."

¹ Interview with Fish in *New York Tribune*, January, 1879.

"Turn the good eye to me that I may see your profile."

"I have it," said Clay. "Did you not give me a verdict as a juror at Frankfort, Ky., twenty-one years ago?"

"I did, I did!" exclaimed the man in delight.

"And is not your name Hardwicke?"

"It is," and turning to his friends he said triumphantly, "Didn't I tell you that Harry Clay would know me, though he hadn't seen me for over twenty years? Great men never forget faces."

Men in Mr. Clay's audiences often walked thirty or even fifty miles to hear him speak. They were in a sense the delegates from their little communities and for days after their return they were obliged to detail the account of their trip,—how Clay had looked and what he had said. To multitudes who could never see or hear him, his name thus became a household word.

Mr. Clay used to take much delight in annoying James Buchanan, both because of his eccentricities and the fact that he seemed to have had a hand in spreading the "corrupt bargain" story. Buchanan had been a Federalist and in the Senate he was once called upon to defend himself against a charge of disloyalty during the War of 1812. He stated on this occasion that he had joined a company of volunteers at the time of the British attack upon Baltimore. "True," he added, "I was not in any engagement, as the British had retreated before I arrived."

"You marched to Baltimore though?" Clay interposed.

"Yes," answered Buchanan, promptly.

"Armed and equipped?"

"Yes, armed and equipped."

"But the British had retreated when you arrived?" pursued Mr. Clay.

"Yes."

"Then," continued Clay, "will the senator from Pennsylvania be good enough to inform us whether the British retreated in consequence of his valiantly marching to the relief of Baltimore, or whether he marched to the relief of Baltimore in consequence of the British having already retreated?"

The galleries broke out into loud laughter and Buchanan boiled with anger, but he wisely refrained from undertaking a reply.

Once Clay wished to bring some of the Democratic leaders into a discussion. He charged them with lying back while they sent their inferiors out upon the skirmish line. "Come out!" said the great Whig. "Come out like men and defend your position! Let us hear from you! I call for the leaders of the party."

Silas Wright and James Buchanan sat near together. It was evident that Clay directed his remarks at them. Wright looked up and then resumed his writing. It would have been better if Buchanan had pursued the same course, but he was provoked to say:

"I am surprised at the language used by the gentleman from Kentucky. He knows well, and the Senate can bear me witness, that I am prompt and direct in expressing my opinions on subjects as they arise, but I choose to take my own time and to con-

sult my own counsels. The gentleman from Kentucky need not expect to force me into this discussion, or any other, till I choose to engage in it."

Mr. Clay in his softest and most charming tones assured Mr. Buchanan that he had intended no reference to him. "Far from it," he continued deliberately, articulating each word. "I called for the leaders of the party."

Buchanan appealed to the Senate, declaring that the senator from Kentucky had fixed his eyes upon him, to which Clay blandly replied that he could easily conceive of the gentleman falling into error. "I often suppose," said he, "that the senator is looking at me when in fact he looks quite another way," a reference to Buchanan's oblique vision, which was hugely enjoyed.

A friend afterward took Clay a little to task for the sally but he had no regrets. "Confound him!" he exclaimed, recalling the Pennsylvanian's part in circulating the "corrupt bargain" story, "he writes letters."

Once John W. Forney, the newspaper editor of Philadelphia, went with Edwin Forrest, the great American tragedian, to call upon Clay in Washington. The conversation turned to Senator Soulé, of Louisiana, of whom Forney spoke favorably. Clay's eyes flashed. They had lately had some unpleasant passages in the Senate. "He is nothing but an actor, sir," exclaimed Clay, "a mere actor." Then, suddenly recollecting Forrest's presence, he added with a graceful motion of the hand, addressing the tragedian,—“I mean, my dear sir, a mere French actor."

Mr. Clay had a large collection of snuff-boxes, as well as of canes, to distribute by will among his various friends. He, however, did not take the weed to excess lest it injure his splendid voice. On this point he used to tell a story of General Dearborn. It was the day after the dinner in Washington to General Lafayette. They stopped at a tobacconist's shop on Pennsylvania Avenue to get some fine Maccaboy, when the general took occasion to remark that snuff injured some voices, and he continued in the piping voice, which it had left him,—“but it has never affected mine in the least.” Clay in telling this story used to imitate the thin nasal tones in which these words were said with the most humorous effect.

By sheer personal grace and charm he could do successfully what others might not safely attempt. In the United States Supreme Court, while arguing a case at some length, he paused in the midst of his speech and stepping up airily to one of the justices, who was holding a snuff-box, took a pinch with the remark, “I see your honor sticks to the Scotch.” Justice Story afterward said of this incident: “I have been on this bench thirty-four years and I do not believe there is a man in this country who could have done that but Henry Clay.”

When he could speak patiently of Jackson at all, it was a real pleasure to hear him relate this story illustrative of the state of culture existing in “Old Hickory's” household. One morning Mrs. Jackson arose with a cold. When she was asked how she had come by it, she said, it was because “during the night General Jackson kept kicking the kivers off.”

On one occasion, it is related, that Mr. Clay was brought face to face with Francis P. Blair, after the latter had gone over to Jackson. Blair was one of the publishers of the Frankfort *Argus*, which had joined in the cry of "bargain and corruption." Clay had ridden over to the state capital on legal business, and on alighting from his horse at the tavern door, confronted Blair, who rather awkwardly tried to escape the meeting.

"How do you do, Mr. Blair?" said the "Great Commoner" as he extended his hand.

"Pretty well, I thank you, sir," Blair responded with some embarrassment. "How did you find the roads from Lexington here?"

"The roads are very bad, Mr. Blair," Clay returned in his most gracious way, "very bad, and I wish, sir, that you would mend your ways."¹

In some of Captain Marryat's wanderings in this country he came to Lexington. As he brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Clay, he was asked to dine at "Ashland." His manners were in marked contrast to those of the other guests, who had been invited to meet him. During the dinner Mr. Clay hospitably urged Captain Marryat to have another glass of wine which he rudely declined, setting down his glass with such violence that it was shattered and saying in loud tones, "No more wine; I have had enough."

Thereupon Mr. Clay turned to another guest, and with great courtesy, said: "Lewis, you will try this wine, will you not? You have not had too much."

¹ Ben Perley Poore, *Reminiscences*, p. 104.

Mr. Clay's readiness in retort is again shown in the case of a passage in the House of Representatives with General Smyth of Virginia, who had attained an unenviable notoriety for long and prosy speeches. In the midst of a tedious discourse he said to Clay :

"You speak for the present generation ; I speak for posterity."

"Yes," replied Mr. Clay, "and you seem resolved to continue speaking until your audience arrives."

"You do not remember my name?" a lady said one time upon meeting Henry Clay.

"No," was the prompt and gallant response, "for when we last met long ago I was sure your beauty and accomplishments would very soon compel you to change it."

The faith which Clay's friends reposed in him is illustrated in a story he used sometimes to relate. There was a man in Kentucky who was everywhere known as "Old Sandusky." He and his neighbors closely followed Clay's course while he was negotiating the Treaty of Ghent. In the newspaper reports of the proceedings were seen now and again the words *sine qua non*. No one knew what they meant. "Old Sandusky" was somewhat perplexed. "Sine qua non," he said slowly repeating the Latin. "Why, sine qua non is three islands in Passamaquoddy Bay, and Harry Clay is the last man to give them up."

Measured by his experience as a presidential candidate, Clay's life may be said to have been unsuccessful. He, of course, had an ambition to attain to

the highest office in the land, but unlike Webster's which was "a little too much mixed with self love," as Governor Letcher one time wrote to Mr. Crittenden, he was "always ready to surrender it for the possible hope of promoting his country's good." Clay was "more elevated, more disinterested, more patriotic," than the great New England leader.

As a presidential candidate Clay, however, seemed to be pursued by the genius of misfortune. That he would have been very glad to have been the choice of the country as early as in 1825, when he gave his influence to John Quincy Adams, is undeniable. He made no movement whatever to oppose Mr. Adams as a candidate for the second term, in 1828, a kind of disloyalty of which he could not have been guilty. He did not think of himself as a candidate at this time.

In 1832 he opposed Andrew Jackson on questions of principles scarcely felt, but it was impossible to win against the military prestige of his opponent. His own Whig party was new and unfit for the contest in a time of remarkable ferment and excitement.

In 1836 the country was still completely in Jackson's hands and Van Buren was elected over several Whigs, not formally nominated for the position.

In 1840 when Clay should have been nominated except for the treachery of some leaders in the convention, who were determined to bring out Harrison, the Whigs were successful by overwhelming majorities.

In 1844 when he was nominated, the situation was rendered much less favorable by the schism in the party created by Tyler, and he was defeated only by

a few thousand votes in New York, which were perhaps fraudulently cast.

In 1848 he was persuaded to allow the use of his name only by the representations of a number of the leaders in Ohio. They insisted upon his candidacy ; he yielded for the sake of the principles involved in the contest, and to prevent the nomination of a military leader, incompetent in civil affairs ; he was deserted by those who had importuned him and Taylor was nominated and elected.

Thus, not taking account of the election of 1824, Clay was twice defeated in the convention in years when he, in all likelihood, would have been elected, and twice defeated by the people when his name was regularly brought before them as a presidential candidate and when, it would appear, a Whig could not have been chosen in any case. Such a record of events can fairly be ascribed only to remarkable misfortune. It led naturally to feelings of humiliation and disappointment. The mortification, however, was always greater to his friends than to Clay himself and it was by them, after all, rather than by any ambition of his own, that he was urged into the campaigns.

He always believed and said that it was no man's right to decline public service unless for excellent reasons, and this became a rule of his life. Moreover, no one can well refuse a post which has not been offered to him, and this fact deterred him from public statements at times when his diligent enemies accused him of seeking the presidency. His devotion to the principles of his party, which he had created in most instances, led him to wish to make them

prevail. From the constantly evinced attachment of his friends, no man had more reason to believe that he was a suitable instrument to represent these principles before the country, and thus he was put in the false light of seeming to be an aspirant for the high office. If he had held it, it is not likely that his reputation would have been greatly the gainer by the experience, however much he should have ornamented the position. His name might have been made more familiar to the school-children as they scan and recite the list of our Presidents. But it is as a parliamentary leader and debater that he shone. For this service did nature especially endow him with his splendid gifts, and in this rôle did he play his distinguished part in the history of the republic.

If he could have forwarded his plans for the colonization of the negroes, the gain would have been great. "Henry Clay, a Kentucky slaveholder, would have saved us," wrote Andrew D. White. "Infinitely better than the violent solution proposed to us was his large statesmanlike plan of purchasing the slave children as they were born and setting them free. Without bloodshed and at cost of the merest nothing as compared to the cost of the Civil War, he would thus have solved the problem; but it was not so to be. The guilt of the nation was not to be so cheaply atoned for. Fanatics North and South opposed him."¹

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 55.

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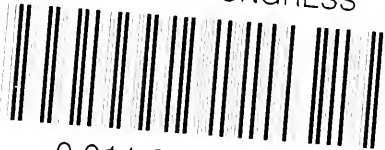
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